THE SPHERE OF TIMELESS AWARENESS

THE EXPLANATORY TEACHINGS

ARRANGED AS A FLOWING NARRATIVE THAT CONDENSES THE VERY ESSENCE

OF THE PROFOUND HEART DROP OF VIMALA

ACCORDING TO THE GREAT CHETZUN

THE QUINTESSENTIAL KEYSTONE FOR THE CATEGORY OF DIRECT TRANSMISSION

IN THE GREAT PERFECTION APPROACH$

THE THREE SECTIONS CONCERNING THE SYLLABLES OF THE FIVE EXPANSES:

THE MOST MAJESTIC OF ALL PITH INSTRUCTIONS$

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The Sphere of Timeless Awareness

[This commentary consists of notes taken by Tertön Sögyal during the explanations of the Chetzun Nyingtik cycle given by Jamyang Khyentzei Wangpo (Ösel Trulpai Dorjé). The first-person voice is therefore that of Jamyang Khyentzei Wangpo. Tertön Sögyal's own comments are in brackets.—Translator]

Homage to the lama!

The great master Vimalamitra memorized the limitless spiritual teachings, vast and profound, that are found in the three categories of the great perfection of utter lucidity—those of Mind, Expanse, and Direct Transmission. The most majestic of all these pith instructions constitutes the quintessential keystone of the most secret and unsurpassable cycle, which is found in the category of Direct Transmission. The glorious Guardian Goddess of Mantra conferred the existing texts associated with the profound sadhana practice of Vimalamitra, texts that had been concealed as hidden treasures, on Sengé Wangchuk, the venerable one of the Ché clan.

Chetzun maintained the secrecy of these teachings and practiced them, during which time the great scholar Vimalamitra's embodiment of timeless awareness appeared to him, not in a dream or a meditative vision, but in actuality. The master remained with his student for a long time and bestowed on him the entire body of ripening empowerments and liberating teachings. Having meditated according to Vimalamitra's instructions, Chetzun attained an actual vajrakaya through the supreme transference to rainbow body. While passing into this state, he conferred vajra words on the dakinis—the pith instructions of these three sections concerning the syllables. The dakinis in turn conveyed them to the realm of Orgyen and a vast array of other such pure realms of dakas and dakinis, where they provided and continue to provide inconceivable benefit for the dakinis themselves and for others. Furthermore I, Ösel Trulpai Dorjé, codified these teachings through a process of recollection, benefiting to a certain extent those to be tamed by them according to their personal lot. Now I am imparting this advice thoroughly to all of you.

This advice has three major parts. The meaningful introduction concerns the special title and the homage offered by the dakinis when this advice was codified. The meaningful main text concerns the profound pith instructions in three sections, as well as biographical information, the seal of entrustment, and the prayers of aspiration. The meaningful conclusion concerns the final vajra verses of advice from the dakini of timeless awareness.

THE INTRODUCTION

The first major part has two divisions: the title and the homage.

Title

In the first division, the first of the three distinct parts of the title begins with "perfect" (*dzog*).[1] Perfect in what sense? There is timeless perfection in one taste—the inseparability of everything within the supremely spacious expanse that is the infinite basic space of phenomena, free of all elaboration.

What is perfect? All phenomena of the world of appearances and possibilities—subsumed within the three modes of samsara, nirvana, and the spiritual path—are perfect without any omission.

In what way are they perfect? Is what we term "the basic space of phenomena" like a huge empty container within which objects in the phenomenal world are like many real "things," good and bad, poured in together, as it were? Or for each of these objects in the phenomenal world, like so many separate things, is there a corresponding nature of phenomena, as though they were inserted into individual pocket-like empty containers? How could there be such a fragmented state of affairs?

How, then, are phenomena perfect? Samsara and nirvana and they entail—good and bad, self and other, inanimate and animate, matter and consciousness, and the like—manifest as distinct forms in an inconceivable and indescribable variety through our direct perception of the world. If we explain all of the many things that manifest, from the conclusive point of view—their ultimate way of abiding—their mode is such

that they are timelessly and solely “of one taste” within the basic space of phenomena, free of elaboration. Not only do they abide timelessly as such, but at no point in the past have they ever been separate in the slightest from that basic space. There cannot possibly be any such separation at present, and there will never be any chance of there being one in the future.

The syllable “-tion” (*pa*) signifies that the basic space of phenomena—that sacred, pervasive, and ongoing state which is thus free of all restriction or localization—is not some “thing” that need be sought elsewhere. It is entirely subsumed within the very nature of one’s mind, within the essence that is moment-by-moment naked awareness, and so there is no need for any basic space or timeless awareness to be found that is separate in essence from awareness.

There are numerous ways to explain the significance of the term “perfection” (*dzog-pa*). In this context my explanation is that all the limitless distinctions that can be made—of sensory appearances and consciousness, kayas and timeless awareness, and so forth—are united in their one taste within the essence that is basic space. And since that basic space, moreover, never goes beyond awareness, all key points are united within the immediacy of that awareness.

“Great” (*chen-po*) signifies that there is nothing whatsoever to be realized or revealed that is superior to the inseparability of basic space and awareness—the ultimate way in which all phenomena abide. And so victorious ones and their spiritual heirs in all directions and times have nothing more to perceive or reveal than this. Thus, the ground of being abides timelessly and without contrivance. The path is the process of realizing self-knowing awareness, which is beyond ordinary consciousness, in one’s direct perception and so becoming familiar with it. With the complete purification of all distortions, the final fruition is one of holding to the ongoing state of authentic being, which is naturally indwelling. Everything is perfect within the essence—the unity of basic space and awareness—and that very essence, free of increase or diminishment, is the supreme inseparability of everything. The three categories of the Great Perfection approach are more exalted than other spiritual avenues, for through them those to be tamed (that is, those of excellent acumen) realize this perfection and make it fully evident.

Among these three categories, the most sublime is the secret category of Direct Transmission. This category consists of the outer, inner, secret, and most secret and unsurpassable cycles. Of these four, this practice pertains to the most secret and unsurpassable cycle. The term "direct transmission" (*men-ngak*) in the title refers to truly marvelous and magical means of ensuring the swift and straightforward accomplishment, with few resources and little effort, of something that has great meaning—means that are difficult for the ordinary imagination to fathom or assess accurately. The word "category" (*dé*) implies something of great value, much greater and more extensive than a few things or something small.

The tantras that pertain to the heart essence of utter lucidity constitute the sublime spiritual approach, the very pinnacle of the entire range of the victorious ones' precious teachings. *The Reverberation of Sound Source Tantra* (*Dra Talgyur Tsawai Gyü*) is likened to a doorway, or key, to all these tantras; the tantra *Naturally Occurring Perfection* (*Dzogpa Rangjung*) is likened to a mighty river; the tantra *Without Letters* (*Yigé Mepa*) is likened to a majestic mountain; the tantra *Naturally Arising Awareness* (*Rigpa Rangshar*) is likened to the ocean; the tantra *Vajrasattva: Mirror of the Heart* (*Dorjé Sempa Nying-gi Melong*) is likened to the sun; the tantra *Six Expanses* (*Long Drukpa*) is likened to a great garuda; the tantra *Perfect Dynamic Energy of the Lion* (*Sengé Tzaldzok*) is likened to a lion; the tantra *Heaped Jewels* (*Rinpoché Pungpa*) is likened to a monarch's treasury; the tantra *Beauty of Auspiciousness* (*Tashi Dzeden*) is likened to a wheel; the tantra *Mirror of Enlightened Mind* (*Tukyi Melong*) is likened to a sword; the tantra *Array of Inset Gems* (*Norbu Trakö*) is likened to refined gold; the tantra *Pearl Garland* (*Mutik Trengwa*) is likened to an adorning garland; the tantra *Adornment Through Direct Introduction* (*Ngotrö Traypa*) is likened to showing a mirror to a coquette; the tantra *Blazing Lamp* (*Drönma Barwa*) is likened to a jewel radiating light; the tantra *Natural Freedom of Awareness* (*Rigpa Rangdrol*) is likened to a snake tied into a knot freeing itself; the tantra *Conjunction of Sun and Moon* (*Nyida Khajor*) is likened to a child climbing into its mother's lap; and the tantra *Blazing Remains* (*Kudung Barwa*) is likened to a monarch ruling over an empire. This makes a total of seventeen texts. The eighteenth

is the tantra *Wrathful Guardian Goddess of Mantra* (*Ngaksung Trömai Gyü*), which is likened to a razor.

Garab Dorjé and many other great rigdzins composed extremely profound and extensive pith instructions and commentaries on these main sources, all of which interpret these tantras correctly. Limitless works of this kind currently exist in pure dakini realms. Some others are profound hidden treasures. In the land of Tibet, furthermore, the heart drop teachings of the great and glorious Orgyen and of the great scholar Vimalamitra appeared in the past and are still extant. Many sublime people, endowed with superb view and meditation and unrivaled by more ordinary spiritual practitioners, have appeared in succession, exist at present, and will appear in the future to uphold these teachings. All of this is due entirely to the lamas' pith instructions. Therefore, it is wholly due to the kindness of teachers—beginning with glorious Kuntuzangpo, the universal ancestor of all victorious ones—that the precious teachings appear, and solely because of the kindness of the teachings that groups of those who uphold these teachings have appeared and will continue to do so.

The term "quintessential keystone" (*chü-pur*) refers to the enormously profound and unique features of these teachings, such as the ease with which the distillation of the teachings just discussed—the quintessential heart drop teachings—can be planted swiftly and straightforwardly in the student's mindstream.

The second part of the title refers to "pith instructions" (*men-ngak*), which are exemplified by the sublime means, very easy and straightforward to apply, of the profound key points—the avenue of sensory experience, the objective frame of reference, subtle energy, and awareness. These points, which are unfathomable to the ordinary minds of pedants, can lead to a definitive conclusion concerning the naturally indwelling kayas and timeless awareness, a conclusion based on direct experience.

The phrase "the most majestic of all" (*tam-chay kyi gyal-po*) signifies the following. The dialectical approaches of hinayana and mahayana are based on causes. The tantras, explanatory commentaries, and pith instructions of the outer and inner levels of the secret mantra approach are based on the fruition. All of these, in fact, constitute exceptional pith instructions, for as means intended solely to bring one to

the state of omniscience, whether directly or indirectly, they are in no way lacking. However, the present teachings are superior to all of them. To give you an analogy, no matter how numerous minor rulers and other people of high rank may be, or how powerful and influential, none of them can in any way match the single figure of a universal monarch. Similarly, no spiritual methods on a level below this one—such as the two profound stages[2]—can match even this one section of pith instructions in the most sublime Great Perfection approach, because they cannot compare with this swift and straightforward path to omniscience.

The "five expanses" (*long-nga*) referred to derive from a detailed analysis of basic space from the point of view of the five aspects of timeless awareness, which are discussed by those who follow the dialectical approach—that is, the basic space of timeless awareness as the basic space of phenomena and similarly with the other four aspects. The "syllables" (*yi-gé*) of these expanses are the means by which the dakini codified the vajra testament of Chetzun—the six syllables of the free expanse underlying the six classes of ordinary beings. The "small A" is subsumed within the **A.** The syllables are then sustained within the basic space of the five expanses of timeless awareness—with *A* being mirror-like awareness, *SHA* awareness as the basic space of phenomena, *SA* awareness of equalness, *MA* discerning awareness, and *HA* all-accomplishing awareness.

When I reached the age of twenty-four (a number equal to that of the tantric gathering places), at a certain point the positive circumstances of place and time came together. Billions of dakinis showed their delighted faces directly to me, manifesting as the emanated retinue of the noble goddess Palgyi Lodröma, and they captivated me with the sweet melody of these six vajra syllables, the natural vibration of primordial sound. Due to their exhortations, there arose naturally in my mind a recollection of prior events, which I remembered just as they occurred. So while it would be appropriate to have these six vajra syllables in symbolic dakini script at the beginning of the text, of necessity they have been written in Tibetan script at appropriate intervals throughout the first section.

Let me expand somewhat on the reasons for categorizing these five expanses. In the context of the ground of being and the spiritual path, the inanimate world

consists of the five elements, animate beings consist of the five mind-body aggregates, and there are numerous other groups of five, such as the objects of sensory experience. In the context of the fruition there are the five buddha families, five kayas, five aspects of timeless awareness, five pure realms, and so forth, manifesting according to their individual qualities and functions, although without arbitrary bias or division. Even as they manifest, they do not stray from their nature, which is a supremely spacious and blissful expanse—the unchanging basic space of phenomena, endowed with the most sublime of all attributes. And so the detailed analysis of the five expanses is in accord with the way in which the various phenomena of samsara and nirvana manifest distinctly. The syllables of these expanses are, in fact, an example of how the majority of miraculous means in the vajrayana—for example, the forms and sounds of syllables—manifest as they do entirely through causes and conditions in the immediate situation. Ultimately, however, they are merely specific manifestations of supreme bliss itself, sublimely unchanging, appearing as this or that.

Thus, such terminology is used because the essence of this garland of syllables as it is contained within the three sections of the text—including the endless ways in which these syllables are called to mind as ideas, written as script, or spoken aloud as words—does not stray from the supreme inseparability of basic space and timeless awareness, arising in this or that specific form. The phrase "three sections" (*dum-bu sum-pa*) refers to the specific divisions of the text.

The third part of the title means that this is the exceptional advice that Sengé Wangchuk, the "great Chetzun" (*Che-tzun chen-po*), who attained the vajrakaya of supreme transference, imparted at his passing. This does not consist simply of remarks made on the spur of the moment, but is in fact the final and most "profound heart drop" (*zab-tik*). It distils the vital essence of vajra words and meanings transmitted without interruption from Kuntuzangpo—the dharmakaya as guiding principle—such as the one hundred and nineteen profound pith instructions thoroughly expounded by the great master "Vimala" (*Bi-ma-la*), the crown jewel among five hundred accomplished scholars.

Homage

As for the second division, when this testament was first codified the dakinis of timeless awareness paid homage with devotion.[3] The significance of this homage concerns the true nature of the minds of all ordinary beings—high, low, middling—who fill space to its limits in all directions and times. This nature is timelessly and totally pure and spontaneously present, without relying on any causes or conditions. It is utter lucidity coemergent with being itself, naturally occurring and supremely pervasive. Without ever straying from the essence of the vast array of all victorious ones of the three kayas, this ground of being arises as the world of appearances and possibilities. As a vast array of purity, it abides as a natural attribute in the infinite array of mandalas of deities who are expressions of timeless awareness. All of these are completely embraced as the unique sphere of being, indivisible within its essence as moment-by-moment self-knowing awareness. The homage is that of respect being shown by direct awareness of one's true face—the way of abiding—unmistakably just as it is, without the slightest concept characterizing a distinction between some object to be realized and someone to realize it.

THE MAIN TEXT

The second major part is an explanation of the significance of the main text, according to the teaching methods that entail profound pith instructions. This part contains three sections—arousing confidence in and certainty about the teachings and lamas, by discussing the history of the lineage; ripening the mindstreams of those students who have not yet been ripened but are suitable recipients, by means of the profound and sublime empowerment; and liberating those who have already been ripened, by means of the extraordinary advice specific to this cycle.

The History of the Lineage

The first section has two divisions—how these teachings arose in earlier times and the prophecy concerning how they would continue later on.

The Early History

In the first place, there is dharmakaya as the guiding principle—the primordial buddha, glorious Kuntuzangpo. Within the supreme context of the pinnacle pure realm—the basic space of phenomena, free of limits or extremes—enlightened mind is the naturally arising state of immaculate subtle energy and awareness, of timeless awareness manifesting naturally from supreme suchness itself, the vajra of space that is original purity, profoundly lucid and nonconceptual. Timeless awareness (*ye-shé*) is made evident by awareness (*rig-pa*) itself, so that what we term "adventitious distortions" can never again come about; as such, it is timelessly and totally pure without anything having to be rejected. The essence of being as emptiness is timeless awareness as dharmakaya, perfect in influence and power as the "supreme principle that permeates all buddha families."

Without ever wavering from this, the nature of being as lucidity is timeless awareness as sambhogakaya—an infinite range of enlightened embodiments and pure realms, naturally manifest and naturally clear. This ensures, moreover, that an infinite array of embodiments and realms, without limits or boundaries, manifests in and of itself as a continuous mandala in the perceptions of bodhisattvas on the tenth level of realization.

All-pervasive responsiveness is timeless awareness as nirmanakaya, revealing itself as countless emanated forms in any way necessary to guide beings under any circumstances and in infinite realms, both pure and impure. This is an infinite and uninterrupted process of manifestation that takes place indeterminately in any and all ways, thus ensuring that the great variety of those to be guided will be benefited by continuous, pervasive, and spontaneous means.

Sambhogakaya as the guiding principle is glorious Vajrasattva, the sublime expression of the vajra family of enlightened mind. Kuntuzangpo directly revealed the teaching of inconceivable great perfection to Vajrasattva in the totally pure

environment of the pinnacle pure realm, and thus the inseparability of teacher and retinue, of enlightened intent and conduct, is ensured.

Vajrasattva conferred the teaching on the sublime nirmanakaya, the rigdzin Garab Dorjé. Born in the western realm of Oddiyana, Garab Dorjé had no human father, but rather is considered to be the child of the glorious Vajrapani, Lord of Secrets.[4] He was born when Vajrapani appeared as a golden swan and caused the awareness of Semlakchen, a child of the gods, to be planted in the center of the heart of Garab Dorjé's mother, in the form of a white *Hung* with a reddish tinge.

Garab Dorjé bestowed on the master Manjushrimitra, a descendant of a class of brahmins from Shri Lanka, the entire range of ripening empowerments and liberating teachings for the Great Perfection approach of the definitive secret, as well as the advice in his testament, *The Three Verses That Hit on the Key Points* (*Tsiksum Naydek*).

Manjushrimitra bestowed on the rigdzin Shri Singha, the son of householders in China, the entire range of ripening empowerments and liberating teachings of this most majestic and sublime spiritual approach, as well as the pith instructions in his testament, *The Six Experiences of Enlightened Intent* (*Gong Nyam Drukpa*).[5]

Shri Singha bestowed the teachings of the Great Perfection approach, up to and including the secret cycle, on both Jnanasutra, the son of very low class people in China, and the great scholar Vimalamitra, the son of householders in Kashmir. At that point Vimalamitra journeyed to other lands, after which Shri Singha bestowed on Jnanasutra the entire range of ripening empowerments and liberating teachings of the most secret and unsurpassable cycle, as well as the pith instructions in his testament, *The Seven Keystones* (*Zerbu Dunpa*).

Vimalamitra, it is said, in turn received from Jnanasutra the full teachings of this most secret and unsurpassable cycle, as well as the pith instructions in Jnanasutra's testament, *The Four Means of Resting* (*Zhaktap Zhipa*). For this reason Jnanasutra should be included in this lineage.[6] Since Vimalamitra's rainbow body is still present as a vajrakaya, he left no testament. He did, however, conceal many hidden treasures of Great Perfection teachings in the land of Tibet. There is no need at this point to discuss the lineages of such teachings, which have already been

revealed by Tingdzin Zangpo, the preceptor of Nyang; the elder Dangma Lhungyal; the incarnate master Gyalwa Zhangtön; and others. This present cycle was bestowed on Chetzun directly by Vimalamitra.

The two teachers Kuntuzangpo and Vajrasattva constitute the actual lineage of the mind-to-mind transmission by victorious ones. Vajrasattva conferred on Garab Dorjé the ultimate lineage of blessing through enlightened intent. The lineage from that point down to Vimalamitra constitutes the lineage of transmission through symbols by rigdzins. Vimalamitra's means of conferring it on Chetzun was discussed earlier, and Chetzun's testament of pith instructions was received by dakinis. All this is clearly set forth in *The Great History of the Heart Drop Teachings* (*Nyingtik Chenmo*), so these are facts in which fortunate people can place their trust. Furthermore, there exists an authentic account of another occasion, when both the master Padmakara and Vimalamitra received the most secret and unsurpassable cycle directly from Shri Singha. This account accords with the lineage supplication authored by the lord Jamgön Lama.[7]

On another note, in *The Perfect Secret of the Sphere of Being* (*Tiglé Sangdzog*)[8] there is discussion only of Singhé Shora,[9] and no other lamas from Kuntuzangpo to Vimalamitra. The point of view taken in that work is that the ruler of forms for all sugatas of the three kayas is Vairochana, the ruler of sensations Ratnasambhava, the ruler of perceptions Amitabha, the ruler of volitional patterns Amoghasiddhi, and the ruler of consciousness Vajra Akshobhya. These buddhas all manifest further in infinite displays as wrathful aspects, feminine consorts, and retinues. The kaya of timeless awareness, in which they are all united, is actually glorious Kuntuzangpo—the governing principle that permeates the sixth buddha family. It is therefore sufficient not to include any other lama before Chemchok Heruka—the supreme universal splendor in which Kuntuzangpo's sacred state is already fully evident—who arose as Singhé Shora, the powerful lord of yogins.

The Prophecy

Now we come to the prophecy as it occurs at the end of the first section of the source text. In these times of extreme spiritual degeneration, an individual such as I,[10] who is the most ordinary of the ordinary, is fully developed from the standpoint of perfectly obvious and authentic flaws, but completely impoverished from the standpoint of enlightened qualities. Nevertheless, the enlightened deeds and activities of the victorious ones do not waver even in a case such as mine, but are very forceful. So, on the occasion when the symbolic syllables of the dakinis stirred the stream of my consciousness from its very depths, ordinary perceptions and mind states were—shall we say—transmuted, transformed, or whatever. In any case, they all vanished without a trace, fading away in and of themselves. In the natural state of rest that followed their disappearance, I found myself in a luminous mansion of precious timeless awareness. I couldn't take my eyes off it. Within this mansion, my immediate awareness in the moment was entirely transformed into the form, speech, and mind vajras of the great Chetzun. Something quite wonderful occurred, for in a very short time Chetzun revealed to a vast gathering of dakinis—dakinis of timeless awareness, of karma, and of the ordinary world—the entire range of ripening empowerments and liberating teachings, presenting them in an extremely clear way, with neither error in meaning nor any interpolation or omission of words. In the wake of this experience, I wrote it down in a secret code and left it at that for the next thirteen or fourteen years. I then initially opened the doorway of these teachings to Lodrö Tayépai Dé,[11] whose coming was prophesied by the Victorious One.

With myself as the sole exception, the great rigdzins of the past were the most highly accomplished of all siddhas, all of them attaining a vajrakaya—an inexhaustible rainbow body. It is my feeling that since thy blessed these teachings again and again, my obligations are met if I explain them and meditate on them.

[Such were my lama's words.]

The Empowerment

A teacher who is a vajra ruler with authentic qualifications bestows the empowerment on suitable recipients. These are people who have a devoted interest

in Buddhism and who have trained their mindstreams through its lower spiritual approaches. Alternatively, there may be a few of good fortune whose acumen has been keen from the very start. They have little fixation on things of this life, and do not just pay lip service to the teachings concerning the heart essence and the lama, but have great faith in and respect for them. There is no hypocrisy in their observance of samaya, and they are not like those frauds who are possessed by maras and who boast about some mere semblance of view and meditation yet act in direct contradiction to the infallible causality of karma. Rather, they are students capable of pursuing their spiritual practice in accord with their lama's instructions.

When the master confers this empowerment on such students, it is extremely important that some maturation be brought about by using the profound means that will make the final fruition evident and that are conferred according to the practical methods of lamas who hold this lineage. The implements and the other auxiliary elements of the ritual must be complete in accordance with the source text. In caring for the students, marvelous and sublime means must be employed, combining the empowerment into the dynamic energy of awareness with the profound teaching on the heart essence, so that the seeds of both ripening and liberation are definitely planted at the same time. The following discussion concerns the significance of the respective steps of this empowerment, which is superior to all others.

In the "elaborate empowerment," the vase water is the catalyst. All fixated perceptions of the material world—the student's body and the objects of the senses—fade in their own ground. The subtle channels and chakras become fully evident as limpid masses of light marked with syllables. Due to this, the ordinary mind—the subjective agent that perceives things—and the subtle energy of karma it entails are naturally free without being rejected. Either they ripen fully, becoming evident as the essence of supreme bliss that is coemergent with being itself, or the special capacity for such ripening to occur is established in the student's mindstream.

In the "unelaborate empowerment," the distilled heart drop of the lama's awakened mind—the nectar of the subtle vital essence of indestructibility—is absorbed into the naturally indwelling "lamp of empty tiglés" in the center of supreme bliss, the chakra in the crown of the student's body as a body of light. With the dramatic

increase of the subtle distilled essence of vajra timeless awareness—for the student and the lama, inseparably—this nectar fills the chakras of the student's luminous subtle channels to overflowing, spreading out even to the tips of the hairs in the pores. This causes awareness to awaken and become fully evident, as a state of timeless perfection within the essence of the inconceivable visionary experiences that are the nature of timeless awareness—blissful, lucid, and nonconceptual. Within this context, the student directs the natural dynamic energy, the subtle energy of timeless awareness, through a breathing exercise. As he or she focuses intently on this, the body of limpid light, together with its channels and syllables, resolves by its very nature into the supreme basic space of nonconceptual utter lucidity and is absorbed therein. All that stirs in the mind—all coarse or subtle thoughts concerning the characteristics of things, whether positive or negative—resolves without a trace into basic space. This ripens into the unique, naked state of freedom from elaboration, uncontrived and timelessly present, and so ensures that the student has the good fortune to attain the ongoing state of authentic being.

The preliminaries for the "extremely unelaborate empowerment" entail the physical training of the vajra stance; the verbal training of the *Hung* exercises; the mental training of resting in a state free of any fixed frame of reference and then arising from that state; and mentally taking on the forms of the six kinds of beings, which leads the student finally to the basic space of emptiness, in which he or she finds rest. These means primarily bring total conviction in their respective ways, specifically a total conviction about one's ordinary mind. By these means, the student comes to the decision that everything having to do with body, speech, and mind, whether positive or negative, is without basis or foundation. At that point, without indulging in any hope or fear whatsoever, the student rests naturally and without contrivance in an unobstructed state that has no fixed point of reference.

For the main empowerment, a crystal that refracts rainbow light is shown as the words of the empowerment are recited. This is an exceptional symbolic means of illustrating the originally pure essence of awareness and its spontaneously present nature. With the use of such a symbol, the power of the lama's enlightened intent being directed toward the student reveals the essence of what is to be illustrated or

realized—the very nature of mind. Empty in essence, it is a supreme state without identity and free of elaboration. Its nature is a supremely pervasive lucidity, timelessly and naturally. These two—emptiness and lucidity—are always inseparable as a supreme state of primordial unity. Ideally, one realizes, in a single instant of recognition, how it is that these aspects never deviate from being the very epitome of self-knowing awareness. In average cases, one has some positive experience in the immediacy of one's own situation. At the very least, one gains an excellent understanding. This indispensable experience of timeless awareness is the ultimate point of the empowerment.

Then the student focuses intently on the key points of physical posture, gaze, subtle energy, and awareness. The lama applies the seal with "Hung," setting the keystone of uncontrived and intuitive meditation on the ultimate meaning of the view. This establishes in the student's mindstream the good fortune to attain the three kayas swiftly by following the path without regressing.

For the preliminaries of the "utterly unelaborate empowerment," the student strips his or her body naked. This symbolic act, or means, establishes the auspicious interdependence for the very nature of mind to shed the cocoon of obscuring overlays, bursting forth as the unity of basic space and awareness in all its nakedness. The master sits up straight with legs crossed and hands in the gesture of meditative equipoise; this is the symbolic means which demonstrates that exceptional states of meditative experience and realization will come about naturally if one never relinquishes correct posture when practicing the path of view and meditation. The student focuses on a blue *A* syllable at the lama's heart center; this demonstrates the avenue of skillful means whereby the lama's mind vajra, unborn and unchanging, is blended in one taste with the student's body, speech, and mind, and so actually establishes the auspicious interdependence for that blending to occur.

The lama recites "Hung" three times, causing the essence of threefold timeless awareness—the majestic blessings of the three vajras—to imbue the student's mindstream in a forceful and direct way, so that all the coarse and more subtle aspects of the student's body, speech, and mind are totally united in the form of a dark blue *Hung*. With the sharp sound of "P'hat," the student enters instantly into the

naturally present basic space of the three kayas, or (if that does not occur) the confusing knot of dualistic perception that binds the student's ordinary mind is directly cut through. The force of this dispels the obscuring flaws that cause one's ordinary mind and body to wander helplessly through ignoble states of rebirth in the three realms. This is the means, or auspicious circumstance, to ensure that one is elevated to pure realms of the three kayas.

Upon perceiving his or her mind to be the very epitome of emptiness, lucidity, and awareness, the student does not relinquish that, but realizes two aspects of timeless awareness—that of emptiness in the approach of "cutting through solidity" (*trek-chö*) and that of lucidity in the approach of "surpassing ordinary experience" (*tö-gal*)—both imbued with the very heart of self-knowing awareness. If one has an uninterrupted familiarity with this realization, one can in this lifetime take a firm stance within the naturally indwelling essence of the three primordial kayas. Alternatively, one can appreciate any of the individual natural modes of the three kayas by recognizing dharmakaya at the point of death, sambhogakaya during the bardo, or nirmanakaya during the process of taking rebirth—recognizing these to be naturally manifest, perfecting the dynamic experience of such realization, and gaining stability.

If none of this takes place, there is at present a vast external array of pure realms of the three kayas (abiding as the fruition made fully evident), of one taste in their multiplicity as a display without limit or boundary. There is as well the very nature of the minds of all limitless beings (including the student), which abides as the essence of emptiness, lucidity, and awareness. There is also the truth of the one taste that is the nature of phenomena (since these realms and the minds of beings never deviate from their timeless commingling), and to this the student brings the exceptional means of the profound secret mantra teachings and the lama's blessings. On the basis of the infallible truth of these interdependent circumstances, at the very least the student passes through a doorway, so to speak, with the certainty that in the following lifetime, or at some future point, he or she will surely take rebirth in these totally pure realms.

The main empowerment involves the physical aspect of the three postures, the verbal aspect of slow respiration, the "far-reaching lasso" (*gyang-zhak*) of the three gazing techniques, and the mental state of resting in equipoise within the inseparability of outer basic space and inner awareness.

At that point, the lama introduces the student directly to the nature of mind with vajra words, and applies the seal of prophecy. Through the power of this conferral, the student directly and unerringly perceives that very nature, unsullied by distortions of subtle energy or ordinary consciousness, to be his or her true face—the genuine kayas and timeless awareness, beheld nakedly and in all their immediacy. This is perceived as the "object" of timeless awareness—of naturally occurring awareness—and the most subtle of sensory faculties. As individuals proceed according to their respective levels of acumen, they bring the path of the four visions to consummation. This empowerment demonstrates the unsurpassable, sublime means by which one can attain the ongoing state of authentic being within inwardly lucid, primordial basic space.

During the conclusion of the empowerment, forms of the lama, white and red garlands of the Sanskrit vowels and consonants, dark blue *A* syllables, and a globe of five-colored light emanate from the respective places of the master's form and are absorbed into the corresponding places of the student's. This process is one of "applying the seal" of the inseparability of the three indivisible vajras of the victorious ones and the lama, as well as their timeless awareness vajra. One is assured, without any doubt, of the good fortune to awaken to buddhahood.

Generally speaking, you should at least definitely understand the foregoing points, for they constitute the very heart of the limitless, extraordinary features of the most majestic of sublime empowerments—the empowerment into the dynamic energy of awareness.

The Advice

The third section has three divisions—the stages of teaching on the preliminaries of this profound advice, the main practice, and the conclusion.

The Preliminaries

The first division, that of the preliminaries, has three subdivisions—the preliminaries to a formal practice session, which make one's mindstream receptive; the seven ordinary steps for training the mind, which are the common preliminaries; and the five uncommon methods of gathering and refining, which are the special preliminaries.

The Preliminaries to a Practice Session

The first subdivision, that of the preliminaries to a formal practice session, has three headings—seeking an isolated environment, letting your body, speech, and mind settle into their genuine state, and supplicating the lama.

Seeking an Isolated Environment

Ours is a realm tamed by the sublime teacher, the prince of the Shakya clan, and is the sublime field of influence for the exalted Avalokiteshvara. In this region are twenty-four places that by their very nature are sites where dakas and dakinis gather; these are reflected inwardly in the structure of the vajra body. If we use this model, the entire nation of Tibet (the central and surrounding regions) corresponds to the so-called secret center, or bliss-sustaining chakra—the special place that is capable of dramatically ushering in the experience of supreme bliss, both exhaustible and inexhaustible. Practice with pure view, understanding this for what it is. Choose locations where circumstances counterproductive to spiritual practice are few and supportive circumstances abound—charnel grounds, mountaintops, glaciers, islands, and forest glens. Whether you choose successive locations that are not frequented by people (whether enemies, thieves, or others) and that foster spiritual practice, or a single location that is conducive to spiritual practice, your primary concern should be

that the environment is free of distracting circumstances. You should stay there for the rest of your life, alone or with suitable spiritual companions.

Letting Your Body, Speech, and Mind Settle into Their Genuine State

No matter how isolated the environment is, if you continually waste your time by carelessly involving your body, speech, and mind in superficial distractions and laziness, or by secretly indulging in negative thoughts and behavior, you are being dishonest with yourself, which is an enormous shortcoming. So that applying yourself to practice will prove meaningful, make a firm vow to remain in retreat, removed from ordinary and superficial thoughts and behavior, always stable in being mindful, alert, and careful. Be moderate in your food intake, clothing, and sleep. Arouse your awareness vigorously. Sitting on a comfortable seat, use the specific conduct of meditative stability, always engaged in formal sitting and thus letting your body settle into its genuine state.

Meditate that all the faults and failings of yourself and others, reinforced for lifetimes without beginning, and especially all circumstances (whether nominally positive or negative) that might hinder or obstruct your practice of this profound path, are purified in their own ground with no trace remaining. As you meditate on this, dispel the dregs of your breath three or nine times, and train so that the movement of the breath in and out is barely perceptible, thus letting your speech settle into its genuine state.

Mentally cast off all concepts, whether positive, negative, or even neutral. Cultivate the motivation to seek liberation by contemplating over and over as follows: "It is said that the nature of mind of all ordinary beings, myself and others, who are equal to space in extent, is the timelessly awakened state of buddhahood. Yet we constantly experience the complex process of causality that produces the three kinds of suffering. This is all like a dream, because, solely through the influence of our lack of realization and self-imposed confusion, things that do not exist appear to do so. How appalling! Now I must swiftly strive at ways to become liberated from all of this."

Meditate over and over, developing an attitude so intense that you can hardly bear it, by thinking as follows: “Ordinary beings, who have been my mothers and who nurture me with kindness throughout the three times, are constantly tormented, helplessly subject to the enormous and endless process of causality that produces suffering. How very worthy of my compassion they are!”

Meditate over and over, one-pointedly cultivating an altruistic motivation, the precious and sublime awakening attitude, or bodhichitta, by thinking as follows: “This attitude of compassion by itself is not enough. I alone will dispel the process of causality that produces their suffering so that no trace remains, and thus bring them to the supreme kayas and timeless awareness that abide naturally within them!”

Contemplate as follows: “This omniscient state, which benefits others, cannot possibly come about without causes or conditions. The consummate swift path that provides the unsurpassable causes and conditions for enlightenment is the very heart of the pith instructions in the Great Perfection approach of utter lucidity. Such a path is difficult for even most ordinary spiritual practitioners to find, so I will bring my practice of this path to consummation, following my lama’s directives and the source texts of pith instructions.” Develop a trusting faith in and devotion for the teachings that you practice at a given time, as well as the lama who teaches you, not simply paying lip service but feeling these in your bones, from the depths of your heart. In this way, let your mind settle into its genuine state.

Supplicating the Lama

Instantly, the world of appearances and possibilities is totally pure as the supreme pure realm of Ogmin, filled with vast clouds of Samantabhadra’s offerings. In the center of this infinite realm is your very kind root lama. The lama’s form vajra overwhelms the world of all appearances and possibilities with the majestic splendor of its major and minor marks of perfection. The lama’s speech vajra, with its melodious tones, reveals infinite doorways to the vast and profound dharma. The lama’s mind vajra is unfailingly concerned with you and all other beings, regarding you all with the wisdom, benevolence, and spiritual power of inconceivable timeless

awareness. Manifesting vividly, as though actually present, the lama embodies the essence that unites the vast array of the victorious ones of the three kayas. Think as follows: "Until I and others attain the very heart of enlightenment, you alone know what to do. There is no other refuge or source of hope for us, not even in our dreams." Arouse such intense devotion and yearning that all other considerations simply fall away naturally. In this way, employ the meditation technique and recite the prayers according to the liturgy, supplicating with a piercing intensity. Finally, with delight and great love, the lama dissolves into you. Imagine that the lama's three vajras and your three avenues blend in one taste, and rest in the very nature of mind for as long as you can without contrivance or artifice. It is extremely important that the foregoing steps always be the foundation for all later stages of practice.

The Common Preliminaries: Seven Ordinary Steps for Training the Mind

The second subdivision concerns seven profound means of training the mind, which are not only applicable here, but are an indispensable source of wealth for all spiritual practitioners in general.

Impermanence

The first of these means is meditation on impermanence. All sensory appearances and all possible life forms, however they manifest—all phenomena in the universe—were not apparent once but have become so as something new, owing to the adventitious coming together of a variety of causes and conditions in their respective cases. Having thus come about, from the next instant onward all such phenomena have no power to remain as they are, but are subject to destruction, with something similar continually arising in their place. Since phenomena so readily undergo change and transition in what is simply a continuous process of replacement—one that, while not evident, is self-perpetuating, a linear sequence of origination and disintegration—what permanence or stability could they have? So regardless of how much anyone has—residence, body, possessions, longevity, life force—none of it

escapes the simple fact that it is impermanent. The life span of human beings in our world is unpredictable; especially in these times of spiritual degeneration, when we are afflicted by attenuated life span, many diseases, and so forth, it is certain that we will die soon.

Meditate again and again, from the depths of your heart, on the fact that all things are comparable to bubbles buffeted by wind on the surface of water, and so turn away from the ignoble ordinary mind that, like the mind of a lunatic, thinks of things as permanent. Until you have an ongoing, uncontrived understanding of impermanence for what it is, contemplate this over and over without losing track of it in any circumstances, whether in your practice sessions or the periods in between. You should strive in every way to prevent yourself from slipping in the slightest into procrastination or laziness in your spiritual practice.

The Unhappiness That Follows in the Wake of Ordinary Happiness

The second means is meditation on the fact that even the happiness of samsara is the cause of unhappiness. As a result of the positive, yet exhaustible, effects of what we have previously reinforced, the happiness of higher states of rebirth manifests in seemingly attractive ways. Due to our fixation on and attachment to them, we are unable to cast off our concerns with this life. Because we are entirely distracted by our thoughts and behavior as we attempt to achieve happiness, we do not succeed at all in spiritual practice. We continually strive to best our enemies, protect our friends, and so on, reinforcing many negative aspects of ourselves as a consequence of each such action. As a result of this reinforcement, we must, against our will, experience many kinds of unhappiness in this lifetime and the more intense suffering of lower states of rebirth in the future.

Therefore, the greater the superficial happiness of samsara, the more seductive, powerful, and completely unacceptable is its influence, bringing ruin to spiritual practitioners. This is analogous to someone being fooled by something poisonous that has a lovely color and fine odor and taste, or by delicious food or drink laced with poison. If you consume anything like this, you will be helplessly afflicted by

the terrible and painful illness caused by the poison. Even though you will then feel regret, a cure will be difficult to find. Understanding that your situation is similar to this, meditate well on the fact that if you do not cut through your attachment and fixation on the seductive happiness of this lifetime, suffering that is hard to bear will come to you and anyone connected to you as a matter of course. So turn your attention away from your fixated desires in this lifetime and strive in all ways to direct your attention toward the sacred dharma.

The Uncertainty of Supportive Circumstances

The third means is meditation on the fact that no matter how much effort anyone makes, there is no chance of supportive circumstances being certain in samsara. All ordinary beings in samsara, whether they are important or insignificant, strive in so many ways to guarantee supportive circumstances that will ensure their mental and physical well-being. However, if their gathering of merit in previous lives has been meager, it will be difficult for them to succeed, and no matter how much they might enjoy the limited results of exhaustible virtue, such results, after having played themselves out, will seem to vanish back into their own ground. They will then feel an even greater craving than before and have no choice but to strive again and again under all kinds of hardship, causing themselves mental and physical pain, without any chance of its coming to an end. There is no point at which all of this will be finished. This situation is surely analogous to a wild animal stricken with thirst chasing after water in a mirage. You should meditate very carefully on this fact and strive from your heart to be content with whatever livelihood is enough to support your spiritual practice.

The Meaninglessness of Ordinary Activities

The fourth means is meditation on the fact that people's superficial activities, whether nominally positive or negative, are all meaningless. All of our experiences in this life, whether good or bad—our joys and sorrows, successes and failures, advances

and setbacks, highs and lows, gains and losses, and so forth—become nothing but more and more distant memories as long as we are alive. When we die, except for the positive and negative consequences to which they lead, these experiences cannot follow after us or in any way help or harm us. Whatever our temporary experiences of happiness or suffering, they are absolutely without the slightest purpose or value for the future. This situation is surely analogous to the fleeting good and bad dreams we have in a single night's sleep. Meditating on this fact again and again, do not indulge in any hope or fear about such superficial happiness or suffering. Rather, it is very important that you apply equanimity, being content with whatever happens.

In brief, by meditating over and over on the shortcomings of succumbing to attachments—to the joys and sorrows, material possessions, and fleeting positive or negative appearances of samsara—you should strive again and again to turn your mind away from such concerns and to make sure that your mindstream is imbued with an uncontrived and totally pure motivation to liberate the minds of others. This is the root of all the sacred teachings, and so you should exert yourself again and again.

The Benefits and Advantages of Liberation

The fifth means is meditation on the benefits and advantages of liberation. If you attain the precious state of an arhat of the shravaka approach—the result of bringing to consummation the true path to liberation[12]—you are finally free of samsaric suffering and its attendant causes, while a wealth of the qualities of peace and bliss become fully evident. So you never fall back into the painful morass that is samsara. This is analogous to the fact that smallpox cannot reinfect the body of someone who has recovered from the disease.

Especially, the consummate fruition of meditating according to the mahayana path is even more exalted than the aforementioned peace and bliss. It is sacred liberation, unsurpassable and sublime liberation, the precious state of omniscience, which is like the most sublime and majestic wish-fulfilling gem. It completely transcends the extremes of conditioned existence and mere personal salvation (as well as their respective causes), constitutes mastery over the two unsurpassable kinds

of benefit, and embodies enlightened qualities that are lasting, pervasive, and spontaneously present and thus are inconceivable, defy description, and are without limit or boundary. So what more is there to say about attaining such a state as this?

The benefits and advantages of even once formulating the desire to attain liberation are such that someone with vajra speech could not enumerate them. So while they have the freedom to do so, it is important that wise people meditate from the depths of their hearts, not simply paying lip service, but striving until an uncontrived and powerful desire to swiftly attain perfect buddhahood is born in their mindstreams. It is also important that, come what may, they make a firm resolve not to abandon this search, even if it costs them their lives.

The Importance of the Lama's Advice

The sixth means is meditation on the importance of the lama's spiritual advice. The sacred dharma, an especially noble path that leads to liberation and omniscience, derives solely from the kindness of the unique and sublime Teacher, the Sugata. The countless avenues of his teachings manifest without bias in spiritually illuminated realms to those who have merit and are to be guided. All these teachings constitute extraordinary spiritual advice, not something that could be considered anyone's personal opinions or fabrications. If you receive from an authentic and learned lama any advice that is concise but complete from beginning to end, you will understand in a very straightforward way what is truly to be put into practice. Thus, the profound advice of a lama is indispensable. This is analogous to the fact that to reach a lofty mansion you need a fine staircase.

In the first place, then, seek out and examine an authentic lama. Once you have found such a lama, if you decide to serve him or her through the three ways of pleasing a teacher and to practice according to the lama's instructions, this superb, direct path is entirely sufficient in itself. It is widely held that a single piece of advice from the lama is more important than a hundred, even a thousand, explanations that have no relevance to one's personal experience, and you can prove this fact to yourself.

The Importance of Resting the Mind in Meditative Stability

The seventh means concerns how to meditate so as to allow your mind to abide in utter relaxation, since this is so important. Simply receiving the lama's advice and understanding the explanations will not free your mindstream, so you must meditate. Many people cut their own throats, so to speak, for their meditation is that of a fool or is corrupted by concepts, or they are incapable of prolonging it. Although they spend their entire lives on some trifling imitation of meditation during their practice sessions, they have no positive experiences or realizations, so it is important that you meditate according to the personal instructions of your lama, if only for a single practice session.

Sit up straight on a comfortable seat in a solitary place. After your breathing has settled into a completely relaxed rhythm, gently hold the intermediate vase breath (*bar-lung*). Rest your gaze directly in front. Relax your mind and body, and do not let this natural state of limpid, clear consciousness wane. Maintain it in all its lucidity, in an utterly relaxed state. Do not let a lot of speculative fantasies corrupt it, or focus your meditating mind too narrowly, or indulge in much hope or fear ("Is this it or not?"). To begin with, practice in many short sessions, resting your mind well in each brief period. Whenever you meditate, observe mindfulness and implement it in your practice, for this is what is meant when it is said, "Without distraction, without reification." As your familiarity increases, extend the length of your practice sessions. If you become drowsy, rouse yourself vigorously. If your mind is too agitated, rest in a relaxed manner. Determine the degree to which your mind should be focused or allowed to relax, as well as what your diet and lifestyle should be, by using whatever agrees with your personal meditative experience. It is a flaw to hold your mind too tightly, as though imprisoning it, or to be too relaxed—for example, to lose the quality of clarity by being sloppy or to let your tongue or your eyes wander. It is a hindrance to talk too much about any spurious psychic powers you experience, or dreams you have, or gods or demons you perceive, saying, "I know this. I have realized that." Whether someone will have any meditative experience, pleasant or

otherwise—of mental activity or anything else—is not uniformly certain, owing to the great disparity in the acumen and makeup of individuals.

As you maintain this state of utter mental relaxation, you experience physical and mental well-being, mental clarity, or nonconceptual awareness (in which forms arise as expressions of emptiness, or in which concepts either cease or do not disturb your mind in any way even if they do not cease). Whatever occurs—any meditative experiences or visions, whether gentle or violent, subtle or coarse, long-lasting or fleeting, powerful or weak, positive or negative—do not concern yourself with them or indulge in evaluating them or reifying them ("Is this it or not?"). Make an utterly relaxed and limpid state of consciousness the very core of your practice. If you are able to serve as your own master, developing each key point as precisely as you would thread a needle, you will achieve a natural stance in which your afflictive emotions are overcome and you do not fall under their influence. Your mind will always be peaceful and tame, able to function as the ground within which all states of meditative absorption—the stages of development and completion—arise. This is analogous to having a well-tilled field, and so it is important that, come what may, from the outset you do not prattle on with a lot of pretentious talk, but instead come to a very precise understanding of your mind and establish a basis for your practice.

Meditate using the foregoing seven means for training the mind, spending whole sessions on each one, beginning with the arousal of motivation and concluding with totally pure-minded prayers of dedication and aspiration. Even between practice sessions, you must make sure to apply them to your mindstream by never losing the aftertaste of each step.

The Special Preliminaries:
Five Uncommon Methods of Gathering and Refining

The third subdivision, that of the uncommon preliminaries, has five headings—taking refuge, arousing motivation, refining away obscurations, gathering the accumulations, and guru yoga.

Taking Refuge

In the first place, the object of refuge is as follows. In the space in front of you, in the midst of vast clouds of offerings, is a lion throne with a seat of a lotus, sun disk, and moon disk. On this sits your root lama as the glorious heruka Singhé Shora, whose form vajra is reddish brown and whose expression is charming and smiling. He is beautiful, with various ornaments of jewel and bone, his hands in the gesture of meditative equipoise, and his legs crossed in vajra posture. His radiance is that of a million suns, creating a mass of light, and the vajra firelight of timeless awareness shines in the ten directions. His speech vajra proclaims the supreme sound of the vajra dharma everywhere. His mind vajra is profoundly lucid awareness as dharmakaya, with the radiance of that awareness naturally lucid as sambhogakaya, and the dynamic energy of that awareness unbiased as nirmanakaya. He is the supreme embodiment within which a vast array of sources of refuge proliferate and resolve. Envision him dwelling in delight, directing his enlightened intent toward you and gazing straight at you with his eyes of timeless awareness. On behalf of all beings, who are equal to space in extent, you are the one taking refuge as you place yourself in the lama's presence with devotion expressed through your body, speech, and mind.

Then there is the way in which you take refuge. It is said that the very nature of mind, of oneself and all beings, is timeless and primordially pure emptiness as dharmakaya, spontaneous natural lucidity as sambhogakaya, and the manifest dynamic energy of their supreme inseparability as nirmanakaya; and that this is by its very nature the timeless state of buddhahood, in no way different from the object of refuge. But you cannot recognize your true nature or appreciate its significance, and this inability functions as the root of all fear and suffering (which is to say, the adventitious distortions imposed by thoughts based on your confusion). To free yourself swiftly, you are moved by an unshakable faith born of conviction. Think to yourself, "You alone are our ultimate and final refuge, guide, and source of hope. I pray that by the power of the immeasurable, majestic blessings of your sublime timeless awareness, we may instantly recognize our true nature to be genuine natural mind. I pray that you may thus completely free us of the limitless distortions imposed

by our dualistic perceptions, and so cause us to awaken to buddhahood on this very seat, our minds blending with yours." With such intense devotion, recite the lines of taking refuge found in the source text an appropriate number of times (a hundred, a thousand, or whatever) and contemplate them. Finally, the lama is absorbed into you, your mind blending with his, and you rest in a state of utter relaxation.

While engaging in any of the four kinds of activity, train in maintaining ongoing awareness, so that you are never separate from your perception of the lama. Blend the lama's enlightened mind and your own mind at all times and in all situations, so that your experience of your natural mind is pure in private as well as in public. This approach also includes the key points of the vows to be observed for the training in taking refuge.

Arousing Motivation

Second, remind yourself that you took the vow to arouse the motivation of bodhichitta earlier, pledging to uphold it when you took the empowerment. The phrase "myself and others" refers to the fact that beings appear, in your direct perception, to be separate from one another. Your ordinary mind, which takes this appearance to be true, has become so entrenched and so developed that you experience "my side" versus "the other side," so to speak, all of which involves a powerful fixation on things as solid. With these two "camps" appearing as though divided from one another, you take that appearance to be true, and that is your fundamental problem. In addition, you make many internal and external distinctions, differentiating the objects of your attachment. You expend your energy relentlessly in two ways—doing whatever you can to make you and yours happy and to avoid suffering. You consider beings who thwart your self-centered designs to be your enemies and do whatever you can to harm them. All that you have done throughout lifetimes without beginning, taking this relentless approach of bias and emotionality, has caused you to turn your back on omniscience, has reinforced the extreme of conditioned existence or mere personal salvation, and has undermined the positive supports of the mahayana approach. This is analogous to some "demon of poverty"

diminishing your personal wealth, and is in fact referred to as “the insidious demon of cherishing one’s identity.”

You must reject such a flawed attitude and strive with an exceptional resolve and application to achieve omniscience for the sake of others. In the present context, the way to meditate on this in an extremely concise way is as follows: “All limitless ordinary beings, who have been my mothers and whose extent is equal to that of space, have been exceedingly kind to me. It is true that the basic space that is the nature of their minds is primordially pure and never deviates from the nature of the three kayas. But they fail to recognize this and, due to the influence of adventitious projections based on their confusion, are perpetually helpless and afflicted by endless suffering in the three realms of samsara. How worthy of my compassion they are! I alone will ensure that they become familiar with the very nature of their minds—that they see for themselves their own true faces—and so become completely free of the confusing nexus of causality that produces suffering, for I will establish them on the naturally indwelling level of the three kayas and timeless awareness. For that purpose, come what may, I must strive to follow this secret path of the inseparability of basic space and awareness—the unsurpassable feature of the most secret and sublime spiritual approach—starting in the appropriate way and becoming skilled in means to bring this path to consummation.” Arouse this extraordinary motivation. Recite the words of the source text, meditating so that they blend with your mindstream, making sure that your clear impression of their meaning accompanies your recitation.

Refining Away Obscurations and Gathering the Accumulations

The methods described under the third and fourth headings, of refining away obscurations and gathering the accumulations, are practiced in conjunction with one another. You yourself appear in the form of the genuine deity, a hollow form free of all obstruction or solidity, limpid and clear, made of light. Down the middle runs the central channel, about the thickness of your ring finger, white on the outside and dark

red on the inside. Its upper end is at the crown of the head, its lower end four finger widths below the navel.

To its right is the red side channel (*ro-ma*), filled with the subtle feminine energy, and to its left is the white side channel (*kyang-ma*), filled with the subtle masculine energy. Both of these are about one-third the diameter of the central channel. Their upper ends turn about a finger width below the upper end of the central channel to curve forward to the right and left nostrils, while their lower extremities curve up into that of the central channel, forming a shape like the Tibetan letter *cha* (ཆ).

Minor channels branch out from these three primary ones. In the crown of the head are the thirty-two white secondary channels of the chakra of supreme bliss, which curve downward. In the throat center are the sixteen red secondary channels of the chakra of enjoyment, which curve upward. In the heart center are the eight blue secondary channels of the dharma chakra, which curve downward slightly. And in the navel center are the sixty-four yellow secondary channels of the chakra of emanation, which curve upward. These channels are like limpid tubes of light.

About a finger width above the junction of the three channels (at the lower end of the central channel) is a lotus, sun disk, and moon disk, on which sits your root lama as Vajrasattva of the padma family of enlightened speech. He is brilliant red, is adorned with bone ornaments, and holds a vajra and bell. His legs crossed in vajra posture, he embraces the feminine consort, his natural radiance. His universal form unites the vast array of victorious ones, and you meditate that he is inseparable from the tummo fire abiding within the ground of being. This constitutes the "power of the support."

For lifetimes without beginning, obscurations and the effects of actions that are harmful by nature or by design—infractions of the three levels of ordination, especially those of the primary and secondary samaya principles—have been reinforced by you and others through body, speech, and mind. With an attitude of extreme regret, think, "I acknowledge and confess all these obscurations and flaws.

May I refine them away and so be purified of them!" This constitutes the "power of disenchantment." Resolve that, henceforth, even if your life were to depend on it, you would not commit these actions. This constitutes the "power of restoration."

Supplicate as follows: "I pray that through the supreme, majestic blessings of the lama's innate compassion and timeless awareness, we may be completely purified of all our obscurations and all the effects of harmful actions we have committed in the past, as well as their attendant habit patterns, and that these never arise again in our mindstreams!" Repeat the hundred-syllable mantra twenty-one times, invoking the lama's enlightened mindstream. Then clear the dregs of your breath, draw up the lower subtle energy, and press down gently with the upper energy. This causes the fire of timeless awareness to blaze from the lama's form and rise upward, circling clockwise as it does so, filling the channels and chakra of your navel center. This incinerates your ordinary patterns of sexual union and all obscurations caused by desire and attachment, refining these away and purifying you of them. Next, the flames fill the channels and chakra of your heart center. They incinerate your ordinary patterns of deep sleep and the obscurations caused by ignorance, refining these away and purifying you of them. Then the flames fill the channels and chakra of your throat center. They incinerate your ordinary patterns of dreaming and all obscurations caused by jealousy, refining these away and purifying you of them. Finally, the flames fill the channels and chakra in the crown of your head. They incinerate your ordinary patterns of waking consciousness and all obscurations caused by aversion and pride, refining these away and purifying you of them. In conjunction with these steps, envision that for all beings obscurations and the effects of harmful actions are completely incinerated and refined away, so that they are purified of them.

When you can no longer hold your breath, exhale and then hold it again, maintaining the continuity of the visualization. At the close of a practice session, relax the breathing technique and repeat the hundred-syllable mantra as many times as you wish, without losing the thread of the visualization. Although it is all right to omit them, it would be ideal to recite any of the following—The Sorrowful Confession of Rudra that is found in *The Confession Tantra,* the lines from *The Tantra of the*

Origin of Chakrasamvara that begin, "O guide, through ignorance and delusion I have . . . ," or the words of the guide of beings, Chögyal Pakpa, that begin, "I acknowledge and confess all the ways . . . "[13]

In the source text and the teaching manual by Jamgön Lama, the breathing technique is not particularly evident, and so the emphasis is on visualization and mantra repetition. If, as in the present case, you consider the breathing technique to be a great key point, you need not repeat the mantra a large number of times. In any event, finally the lama Vajrasattva, with a delighted heart and smiling countenance, grants your request with the words "O child of spiritual heritage, you are completely purified of all your faults and failings." Rest in equipoise, blending your mind with the lama's. The foregoing constitutes the "power of engaging fully in antidotes."

Next, for the practical technique of gathering the accumulations, the visualization has a further ramification, in that there is a seat of a lotus, sun disk, and moon disk in the hub of each of the four chakras located within the central channel. On the seat in your crown chakra are white masculine and feminine deities in union, embodying the form vajra of the lama. In your throat chakra are red deities in union, embodying the speech vajra of the lama. In your heart chakra are dark blue deities in union, embodying the mind vajra of the lama. In your navel chakra are brilliant yellow deities in union, embodying the timeless awareness vajra of the lama. All of these deities bear the major and minor marks of perfect form, are naked, and are adorned with bone ornaments. The masculine deities, holding vajras and bells, embrace their feminine counterparts and sit in vajra posture. The feminine deities, in union with their masculine counterparts, hold driguks in their right hands and skullcups of amrita in their left. Within each of the secondary channels is a lotus and sun disk seat, on which stands a dakini. The presence of these retinue dakinis of the basic space of timeless awareness constitute the specific circumstance that makes directly evident timeless awareness that is coemergent with being itself, blissful yet empty. They are white, red, dark blue, or yellow (as the case may be), hold driguks and skullcups, and dance blissfully. Envision that they are present, their blessings palpable.

For the special offering in this case, meditate on the so-called white element, which abides within the ground of being and is located inside the central channel,

above the crown chakra. The double- and triple-distilled quintessence of this white element manifests as a brilliant white *Hang* syllable, turned upside down. Simply to think of this arouses supreme bliss effortlessly, and it is at the point of dripping the amrita of timeless awareness—a nectar in which all buddhas unite.

Pray from your heart to the lama Vajrasattva and consort located below your navel chakra, "Please ensure that I swiftly perfect the supreme accumulations of merit and timeless awareness, so that omniscient timeless awareness becomes fully evident to me." Invoke the lama's enlightened mindstream by repeating *Maha Sukha Vajrasattva A Hang* a hundred or more times.

Then invoke it further by holding your breath well, as before. From the lama's form blazes the fire of timeless awareness, passing upward through the central channel and in front of the lama's aspects in the crown chakra to touch the *Hang*, causing amrita to flow from it. This amrita infuses the masculine and feminine deities of the lama's form vajra and their retinue in the crown chakra, delighting them with the offering of joy. The amrita joins with amrita flowing from the forms of these masculine and feminine aspects of the lama, filling the channels and chakra in the crown center. This purifies you of the coarse obscurations that affect your body and the more subtle ones that affect your channels, and perfects the supreme accumulations. Joyful timeless awareness awakens in your mindstream, and utter lucidity as emptiness becomes fully evident. You become the nirmanakaya, inseparable from the form vajra, apparent yet empty.

The amrita flows to your throat center, infusing the masculine and feminine deities of the lama's speech vajra and their retinue, delighting them with the offering of sublime joy. The amrita joins with that flowing from their forms, filling the channels and chakra in your throat center. This purifies you of the coarse obscurations that affect your speech and the more subtle ones that affect your subtle energy, and perfects the supreme accumulations. Sublimely joyful timeless awareness awakens in your mindstream, and utter lucidity as greater emptiness becomes fully evident. You become the sambhogakaya, inseparable from the speech vajra, audible yet empty.

The amrita flows to your heart center, infusing the masculine and feminine deities of the lama's mind vajra and their retinue, delighting them with the offering

of unique joy. The amrita joins with that flowing from their forms, filling the channels and chakra in your heart center. This purifies you of the coarse obscurations that affect your mind and the more subtle ones that affect your bindu, and perfects the supreme accumulations. Uniquely joyful timeless awareness awakens in your mindstream, and utter lucidity as total emptiness becomes fully evident. You become the dharmakaya, inseparable from the mind vajra, aware yet empty.

The amrita flows to your navel center, infusing the masculine and feminine deities of the lama's timeless awareness vajra and their retinue, delighting them with the offering of joy that is coemergent with being itself. The amrita joins with that flowing from their forms, filling the channels and chakra in your navel center. This purifies you of the coarse and more subtle obscurations of changes that affect your body, speech, and mind (which are subject to degeneration), and perfects the supreme accumulations. Joy beyond joy, timeless awareness that is coemergent with being itself, awakens in your mindstream, and utter lucidity as utter emptiness becomes fully evident. You become the svabhavikakaya, the sublimely unchanging unity of bliss and emptiness.

Train in this process over and over. At the close of a practice session, the secondary channels and dakinis in the retinues are absorbed into the respective heart centers of the lama's aspects. Your upper body, from the hair on your head downward and including the upper portions of the three channels, as well as the lama's aspects in your crown and throat chakras, dissolves into white light, which is absorbed into the aspect of the lama in your heart center. Your lower body, from the tips of your toes upward and including the lower portions of the three channels, as well as the lama's aspects in your navel and subnavel chakras, dissolves into red light, which is also absorbed into the aspect of the lama in your heart center. Then the lama instantly vanishes into the basic space of phenomena and you rest in equipoise, in an inconceivable state free of all basis or foundation.

When you arise again from that state, you appear clearly in the form of the genuine vajra deity, recite prayers of dedication and aspiration, and go about your usual activities.

Guru Yoga

The fifth heading concerns a concise practice of the two stages for forging the path with the lama's blessings; it serves as the basis for the phase of approach in the guru sadhana and the main completion stage. When you put this into practice, exhale to clear the dregs of your breath and meditate well, letting your consciousness rest in its natural state. Carry out the stages of meditation as clearly as you can, following the liturgies that express the meaning found in the source text.

At the conclusion of the invitation, as you use the mantra of Vimala and the five *Hung*s as an invocation, forms of Vimala come from the Five-Peaked Mountain[14] and those of Chetzun from the realm of the dakinis. These countless forms are dark blue, white, yellow, red, and green—in essence timeless awareness as the five expanses. These forms approach and are absorbed continuously into the five places of your form and the lama's.

The meaning of the seven-branch prayer is as follows. The lama, who has brought the path of the four visions to consummation, has made fully evident the supreme empire of the three kayas—timelessly unborn, forever unceasing, and naturally indwelling. The lama and your own mind abide inseparably as the three aspects of essence, nature, and responsiveness. You pay homage to that lama by encountering your true nature—the lama and you may now seem to be a duality, but are in actuality a timeless unity beyond union and separation.

You present clouds of offerings—a vast array that is not arranged but occurs naturally—as the totally purified experience of dynamic energy of awareness, once subtle energy and mind have dissolved into the basic space of awareness.

You confess all harmful actions and failings, which are adventitious, within the uncompounded expanse that is the unity of basic space and awareness, not rejecting them but freeing them in their own ground.

With a mind free of all dualistic perception of self and other, realization or the lack thereof, good and bad, and so forth, you rejoice in the significance of the fact that things lack characteristics.

You pray that the supreme wheel of dharma—the unhindered and majestic blessings of timeless awareness as the dynamic energy of awareness—which points to inexpressible ultimate reality, will be turned in conjunction with the profound melody of unceasing vajra speech.

You pray that Vimala's vajrakaya will remain present in the supreme state of ultimate being, without transition.

You dedicate your limitless wealth of virtue, which is illusory and based on interdependence, within the basic space of utter lucidity, in which there is no framework involving subject, object, and their interrelationship.

Carry out these steps one-pointedly. Then recite the lineage prayer as usual or, if you wish, alter one line slightly to "Shri Singha and Jnanasutra, who received empowerment into the dynamic energy of awareness."[15]

The meaning of the words of the prayer found in the source text is as follows. You brought to consummation the four visions—the direct perception of the nature of phenomena, the enrichment of meditative experience, the full expression of awareness, and the resolution of phenomena into their true nature—which constitute the paths of trekchö (involving the originally pure quality of utter lucidity as emptiness) and tögal (involving the spontaneously present aspect of utter lucidity as visionary states). Since you have made evident the consummate state endowed with twofold purity, your completely unchanging awareness naturally arises as the five kayas of supreme timeless awareness—a splendid presence for those who are to be guided. Yours is the natural form termed "vajra"—that is, indestructible and subtle—the supreme transference to the peerless rainbow body, which is not even mentioned in any other tradition. Ah, precious lama with mastery over deathlessness, Drimé Shenyen,[16] you know all. I thus call on you by name. With the innate compassion of your unobstructed timeless awareness, think lovingly of me, the one who follows your example. Without waiting for some future time, grant to me directly and instantly, here and now, your supreme blessings, so that my inseparability with you becomes fully evident, not some fleeting meditative experience or what have you.

Once you have exerted yourself in praying with a piercing intensity from your heart and repeating the mantra, in conclusion pray once more in order to receive

empowerment. Carry out the visualizations for receiving empowerment in accord with the liturgy.

If you prefer a more elaborate approach, and perform the offerings and praises specifically for Vimalamitra, after absorbing the deities as expressions of timeless awareness, emanate offering goddesses and offerings from your heart center. Insert the offerings and praises from *The Activity Ritual of the Ultimate Secret,* envisioning that these offerings are actually made. Then carry out the stages of the seven-branch prayer, supplication, receiving empowerment, and drawing the lama into the small tiglé at your midbrow. Repeat the mantra while focusing your awareness on the completely clear visualization of yourself as the deity, and in particular on the small tiglé at your midbrow.

Here you can use the so-called vajra repetition. Train gently in forging your path by thinking of the sounds of *Om* during your natural inhalation, *Ah* during retention, and *Hung* during exhalation, or else visualize the forms of these three syllables—white, red, and dark blue, respectively—and think of the sounds, whether one after the other or all at once.

If you tire of this and wish to use the visualization of light shining and reconverging, practice this according to the source text, with light of five colors shining from the small tiglé, and then draw the pure universe into you. It is fine to perform this as much as you wish before the actual dissolution stage of the sadhana. At the conclusion of a practice session, you can perform the offerings and praises from *The Activity Ritual of the Ultimate Secret,* understanding this to be a process of making offerings to yourself with clouds of offerings emanating from you. It is also fine if you omit this step.

During the dissolution stage—the exceptional technique for incorporating into the spiritual path the patterns of dying and passing through the bardo—the pure universe is drawn into your heart center. Your mind and body, appearing as the deity, are concentrated into the small tiglé at your midbrow. Focus your awareness one-pointedly on the small tiglé—translucent, brilliantly clear, and unwavering—and abide for as long as you can. This is the path to prepare for your passing away. Furthermore, focus intently within basic space free of elaboration; refresh yourself in the naturally

unconditioned state free of concepts, without any need for awareness to look *at* basic space. This is the means to incorporate the yoga connected to the bardo into the spiritual path.

Once again, arise vividly in the form of the genuine vajra deity. In allowing the appearances, whether positive or negative, that manifest to the six avenues of your consciousness to arise in a relaxed way as objects of their respective senses, do not indulge in concepts such as whether or not they truly exist. Rather, take a firm stance of awareness in the immediacy of what lies at the very heart of your meditation practice at any given moment—the appearance of the deity, the visions of basic space, or what have you.

These specific stages of the lama's form, the small tiglé, the vajra repetition, and the shining and reconverging of light are all like piling dry wood on a fire. If you implement them to gain some clarity and stability, with each one supporting the others, you are staying true to what it means to integrate the stages of development and completion.

The completion stage can be summarized as follows. All sensory appearances—whether the deity and the visions of basic space during practice sessions, or those appearances manifesting to the six avenues of consciousness—are such that ordinary conceptual consciousness merely imposes order on them, for they have never existed as anything whatsoever. As for the consciousness, along with its contents, that imposes this order, what else is there to it but what can simply be described as the vivid manifestation of what is ineffable? The ultimate essence of that consciousness is the basic space of phenomena itself, which is beyond the scope of dualistic imagination, with the knower separate from the known. But due to timeless awareness as individual self-knowing awareness, in which there is no duality of an object and its subjective perceiver—the view is the perception of basic space in all its nakedness, free of elaboration and requiring no support. When those immersed in such genuine realization incorporate into their experience this supreme freedom from limits—the very nature of mind, an inner space that is nonconceptual and naturally lucid—meditation consists of immersing oneself in the genuine experience of becoming familiar with that, or of gaining clarity and stability. And conduct entails

not indulging in sense objects or ordinary states of mind, whether they are positive or negative, but gaining mastery over all of them as a matter of course, so that they arise as adornments of awareness.

If you exert yourself for even seven days without a break in this view, meditation, and conduct, you will simultaneously accomplish the yogas of both calm abiding and profound insight. The form of the deity does not obscure the essence of basic space, and even if you do not meditate on that form, only resting in the equipoise of basic space, it nevertheless arises of its own accord. The indications that the ten kinds of subtle energy[17] are controlled also arise of their own accord. Since this is because you have been taken under the lama's care and received blessings, you should meditate with one-pointed faith and devotion, entertaining no doubt.

Thus, use these profound preliminaries, uncommon and special, as the foundation and life force of your practice. Then embark on the main practice for this most majestic and sublime spiritual approach of utter lucidity.

The Main Practice

The second division, that of the main practice for this profound advice, has two subdivisions—the stage of development involving the lama, as a devotional practice, and the uncommon stage of completion focusing on the very essence of being.

The Guru Sadhana

First, in a place of spiritual accomplishment that is isolated and agreeable, arrange the offerings in accord with your capabilities—medicine, rakta, tormas, offerings, tsok substances, and offering tormas to the guardian deities. Place yourself in strict retreat and practice the preliminaries that refine your mindstream for an appropriate amount of time, depending on what opportunity is available. After that, begin your evening practice session with the lineage prayer and complete the taking of refuge, the arousal of motivation, and the gathering of the accumulations from *The Activity Ritual of the Ultimate Secret*. Then arise as the glorious Singhé Shora in the

form of the red heruka Hayagriva, who wears wrathful garments, holds a driguk and skullcup, and has a green horse's head with a white blaze protruding through his hair. Perform the torma offering to the local spirits as usual. It is sufficient to do the meditation on Hayagriva and the torma offering to the local spirits just on the first day. You need not erect cairns to the four great kings.

Beginning with the establishment of the boundary in *The Activity Ritual of the Ultimate Secret,* continue through the praises, and then recite the prayers, repeat the mantra assiduously, and receive empowerment. Then meditate well, emphasizing the appearance of yourself as the deity. This is extremely straightforward, since there are no forms other than the two lamas on which to meditate.

Recite and contemplate the verses that explain the meaning of the mantra as they are found in *The Activity Ritual of the Ultimate Secret,* then repeat the root mantra, use the vajra repetition, and perform the visualizations of light shining and reconverging. After exerting yourself assiduously in repeating these root mantras in succession, recite the Sanskrit vowels and consonants, the hundred-syllable mantra, and the Essence of Interdependent Origination. In conclusion, perform the offerings and praises to the lama and to yourself, as in *The Activity Ritual of the Ultimate Secret.*

Next, recite the Inexpressible Ultimate Confession according to *The Confession Tantra.* Perform the tsok offering and the offerings to the guardian deities in the usual manner. Except on the final day, you need not perform the acceptance of siddhi. Once again, perform the offerings and praises as before and recite the confession of faults.

Then pray to the lama three times for empowerment, visualize receiving empowerment, and rest in equipoise, blending your mind with the lama's. Then perform the dissolution and reappearance of yourself as the deity, as explained before, and recite the prayers of dedication and aspiration and the auspicious wishes as usual. Meditate, practicing the completion stage in a concise way, and then engage in the yoga for going to sleep. In the early morning session, in conjunction with the liturgy of the preliminaries, carry out the visualizations and mantra repetitions for the meditation on yourself as the deity, as explained previously.

If you wish to observe six daily sessions, in addition to the two earlier and two later sessions, schedule sessions at noon and midnight. (If four sessions are more convenient, these two sessions are not necessary.) In any case, except during the early morning session, practice *The Activity Ritual of the Ultimate Secret* up to and including the mantra repetition, then perform the offerings and praises, the confession of faults, the prayer to the lama for empowerment, and so forth, in their entirety, through the auspicious wishes. It is sufficient to offer tsok and the tormas to the guardian deities once a day, so do this during the afternoon or evening session.

Although you might go through the motions of being in retreat for a long time, repeating the mantra a number of times in a desultory manner and so on, if you have no clarity in your practice of the stages of development and completion there is the danger that you will succumb to nonspiritual attitudes, becoming discouraged at heart and giving up on the dharma. So it is quite important that your mind be clear and pure. If you make excellent effort, you will receive indications of success in twenty-one days.

On the final day, replenish the torma you set out previously with torma substances and practice *The Activity Ritual of the Ultimate Secret* during the early morning session. After the mantra repetition, perform the offerings and praises, the confession of faults, the prayer to the lama for empowerment, the receiving of empowerment, and the dissolving of the lama into the tiglé at your midbrow. Then instantly meditate that the torma is actually Chetzun, with the conviction that all sources of refuge unite in him. Recite the words for the acceptance of siddhi; then place the torma on the crown of your head, touch it to the three places on your body, and partake of a small amount of the torma substances, so that Chetzun, the deity of the torma, dissolves into the middle of your heart center and you instantly bring the path of the four visions to consummation. Feel that you have received the supreme siddhi of being inseparable from Chetzun himself, awakening to buddhahood as the vajrakaya of supreme transference. Arousing certainty about this, rest in equipoise. At this point the dissolution and reappearance are not necessary, and you can finish the early morning session with the usual prayers of dedication and aspiration and auspicious wishes.

During the morning session, practice a concise summation of the liturgy for the preliminaries and, as a substitute for the fire pujas that supplement such practice, focus on the key points of refining away obscurations and gathering the accumulations, using the breathing technique. During the afternoon session, set out whatever tsok and tormas are available and perform *The Activity Ritual of the Ultimate Secret,* focusing briefly on the mantra repetition. Following seven repetitions each of the Sanskrit vowels and consonants, the hundred-syllable mantra, and the Essence of Interdependent Origination, perform the offerings and praises. Recite the Inexpressible Ultimate Confession, perform a hundred or more tsok offerings, and perform the offerings to the guardian deities assiduously. After this, perform the offerings and praises, the confession of faults, and so forth, through the auspicious wishes. As well, recite prayers of dedication and aspiration and auspicious wishes as extensively as you can. Then you can relax your retreat gradually.

[When my lord master was explaining this, I did not fully grasp the way in which the schedule of sessions for *The Activity Ritual of the Ultimate Secret* was to be divided, so I had to ask him to speak of it again. I then made a list in his presence.]

The Uncommon Stage of Completion

This second subdivision has three headings—advice that frees those of the highest acumen in this lifetime, frees those of average acumen in the bardo, and frees those of inferior acumen in a natural nirmanakaya pure realm. In this context, the term “acumen” refers to the practical implementation of tögal, the approach of spontaneous presence. This is the innermost heart of this profound path, for which one’s eyesight must be flawless. With faith, diligence, meditative absorption, and sublime knowing as a basis, students are further classified into those of highest, middling, or lesser acumen, depending on the degree to which they have unshakable faith and devotion in the teachings that concern the very essence of being and the lama who confers these.

Those of the Highest Acumen

First, the process by which those of the highest acumen are freed in this lifetime has two subheadings—the preliminary phase (the means of cutting through the basis of confusion) and the main practice (the means of releasing confusion into its naturally free state), with the additional means of allowing perceptions based on confusion to arise as timeless awareness.

The Preliminary Phase

In the first place, what is called the "basis of confusion" is the all-consuming and erroneous state of conceptualization that functions as the basis, or source, of all that is to be renounced according to the Truth of the Path—which is to say, the causes discussed in the Truth of the Origin of Suffering and the results discussed in the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering. Given that the "way of abiding" is a timeless freedom from everything that can be characterized by conceptual elaborations, our ordinary minds are contrary in failing to understand that but rather perceiving things in terms of such characteristics. As long as this higher nature is not fully evident, such contrariness occurs adventitiously in beings' mindstreams and seems to be an ongoing part of that nature. If we do not renounce it through the Truth of the Path, it is endless in that it cannot possibly play itself out. It is what we ordinary beings with contrary minds have been habituated to for such a long time that it seems to be very true and very much the way things are.

Such a contrary mind has strayed from its natural state, which is ultimate reality free of elaboration, and has reached a point quite distant from it. But now, if you never find the return path, or even if you do, are you too far gone, so to speak, in that you have completely lacked the means to return to your natural state for such a long time? Of course not! Once you take the situation in hand with even a few of the profound methods of pith instructions, it is easy for even those contrary concepts that have gone on for so long, those perverse habits that are seemingly so powerful, to be brought back in an instant to the supremely blissful freedom from elaboration that is

their natural state. To give you an analogy, it can be like changing your diet or clothing, or waking from sleep. This is what the *Glorious Kalachakra Tantra* means when it says that even those who in this lifetime have committed all five actions that bring immediate karmic consequences can attain perfect buddhahood in this same lifetime. And in the sources of the Great Perfection approach it is stated that whether one's karma is positive or negative, or whether one's intelligence is sharp or dull, is irrelevant.

All this is in harmony with the meaning that underlies the secret mantra approach's superiority in skillful means, so how could it possibly be like what some who oppose spirituality mean when they say, "Although one's wrong views are great, this is not a shortcoming. Although one's faith is great, this is not of any advantage"?

In the present perverse times, a great many announce that they are great meditators, siddhas with true realization. But the majority of them arrogantly assume they have recognized their minds if they recognize that thoughts, being impermanent, have faded away. They arrogantly assume that there is confusion only when thoughts arise and that they are therefore free if none do arise. At times they take all thoughts, whether positive or negative, to be their enemies, and so prevent themselves from doing as much as they can with their positive attitudes. At times they take all thoughts to be valuable and extol even their harmful states of mind, striving at conduct that is demeaning, arrogantly assuming that everything, whether positive or negative, is the ever-changing display of dharmakaya. However much they think they realize emptiness in their view and meditation, this only serves as a foe to their understanding of the infallibility of karmic causality. In such ways they are great traitors of the teachings—those who "turn the wheel" that stirs up the demons of the mind as they pile boulders on the corpses of beings in these final, degenerate times. Forget about people who have recognized the nature of mind and meditate—even people who try to find out what "confusion" is seem as rare as stars in the daytime.

To summarize, not only does the mere quality of consciousness in beings' mindstreams have neither beginning nor end, but even the distortions that corrupt that quality are not separate from it. Like "injurious maras that accompany one," distortions that occur are one's companions. It is true that we find reference to such

things as “nonrecognition that seems virtually identical to the nature of mind” and “nonrecognition that is coemergent with being itself.” But unlike the supreme bliss that is coemergent with being itself (as a state of unity is never subject to union and separation), in no way is there some confused mind that, as such, abides forever in some genuine way. You must reach the decisive point at which the basis for such confusion can never reassert itself, even in some relative sense. If you are able to, making such a decision constitutes the exceptionally exalted Truth of the Path—the actual antidote to this confusion—but what could it be other than this?

If you wonder what the Truth of the Path consists of, it is a superb state of sublime knowing. Thus, to ensure that this profound and extensive state of knowing—which comes from hearing teachings, contemplating, and meditating—arises swiftly and straightforwardly, there are limitless means, such as practicing the stage of approach for one’s personal deity, each one seeming better than the last. But in this present context, if you have even a glimpse of your true nature—mind itself—and become familiar with it, dynamic energy expresses itself effortlessly as sublime knowing. So do not pay attention to the forces of the maras, when for example others find fault with this approach. Rather, if you can focus intently on this key point, it will dispel the darkness in your mind—the doubts and other hindrances on your path—and enable you to understand unerringly what that true path is. So exert yourself from the outset in methods of recognizing your true nature—mind itself.

However, while your true nature is overlaid by the coarse aspects of subtle energy and mind, it is difficult to perceive the very nature of mind just as it is, even if you try to decide that it is empty or lucid. This is like someone who, wishing to see the sun, looks up at the sky many times when the sky is in fact thick with clouds. To put an end to the stirring of these coarse aspects of subtle energy and mind, you must rely on the accomplishment that comes from savoring the pith instructions that accord with the words of the Victorious One. With this as a basis, in the unsurpassable tradition of the secret mantra approach—consisting of such excellent pith instructions—the process involves an authentic practice of the development stage, however extensive or concise, after which the practice of the profound completion stage causes the subtle energy to enter the central channel, abide there, and

dissolve. At the end of these three phases, utter lucidity becomes fully evident. There are many such exceptionally exalted methods, but you need not practice them in this context, for instead there are pith instructions on methods for cutting directly through concepts based on confusion, instructions that are easy to apply yet very effective. If you implement them as intended, these concepts based on confusion, along with the subtle energy of karma, will cease naturally. At that point, whether you identify the unconfused nature of mind or not, there is no choice but for it to burst forth in all its nakedness.

The path of cutting through the very root of confusion serves as the vehicle for such methods. Four topics are crucial to that path—physical training, verbal training, mental training, and key points that are essential to all of these.

At this point, it is time to put into practice the meaning of the preliminary stages found in the extremely unelaborate empowerment. So you should go to a very isolated spot and give a torma and "golden drink" (*ser-kyem*) to the local spirits, enjoining them to carry out their activities of dispelling counterproductive circumstances and ensuring supportive ones. Arouse the motivation of unsurpassable bodhichitta and pray fervently to your root lama, blending your mind with the lama's. Standing up quickly, adopt the vajra stance, envisioning for a short time that your body is a blue five-pronged vajra, completely wreathed in swirling flames of timeless awareness and giving off sparks, so that nothing whatsoever could affect it. Then sit with your body straight and, as you simply recite "Hung" aloud, meditate that the world of all appearances and possibilities becomes nothing but blue-black *Hung*s, radiating the five-colored light of timeless awareness and blazing with fire. The natural sound of these syllables resounds like a thousand dragons roaring all at once. Repeat *Hung* forcefully to a melody for a short time, in a spontaneous way. Next, cut through all thoughts and memories in your mind, whether they are positive or negative, and rest in a nonconceptual state of equanimity. Reciting the sound "P'hat" forcefully, arouse yourself from that state and clearly bring to mind, as much as your imagination can embrace them, all the physical movements of the six classes of beings, their speech and noises, and all their mental experiences—positive, negative, and neutral. Once the mental image has become clear, utter the sound "P'hat" and

cut off any further involvement. Refresh yourself in the state free of any speculative elaborations. Then repeat the preceding steps.

It is all right if, from time to time, you devote some intense energy to acting out the physical movements and verbal expressions of the six classes of beings. But do not become distracted or sloppy about this, or treat it as some kind of game. Once you have spent three days, or even one, on these exercises, you should embark on the actual means for training your body, speech, and mind.

Physical Training

First, while awareness is not born from anything whatsoever in your body, whether noble or otherwise, as long as you are alive it abides as the very state of utter lucidity within your body, as though in the heart center. If you focus intently on your body using the key points of the path, this awareness becomes evident.

So, in order to practice the vajra stance, use whatever room is convenient and set out a mat so that your body will not be injured even if you fall over. Meditate while thinking very clearly, "In order not to engage any longer in the samsaric process of embodiment, but instead to attain the form vajra of buddhahood, I will strive on this path!" Pray to your lama and blend your mind with the lama's.

Then stand, rising up slightly on your toes with your heels joined. Extend your knees out to the sides. Keep your waist, neck, and head in a straight line and press your palms together above the crown of your head (not touching it), with your elbows spread out to the sides. Keep your gaze straight ahead and let your consciousness rest in its natural state. As your stamina begins to fail, tense all the parts of your body and use the energy of your abdominal area to hold the stance, so that you begin to tremble. If you feel dizzy and about to faint, pay no attention, but arouse your awareness vigorously. If you cannot hold the stance any longer and fall over, let go and refresh yourself in the state without any fixed frame of reference. Do not become discouraged even if you are exhausted, but strive courageously. Since this is the means of cutting off the stirring of subtle energy and ordinary mind, you need not always perform a complex visualization.

At twilight and other times, meditating on your body as a blue five-pronged vajra shining with five-colored light and fire of timeless awareness has value, in that hindrances will not affect you, the dynamic energy of your awareness will blaze, and eventually you will attain unchanging dharmakaya, imbued with the five aspects of timeless awareness. Alternatively, meditate yourself to be a blue, three-pronged vajra. Of the three upper prongs, the central prong signifies dharmakaya, those to the right and left the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya—that is, the rupakaya. Of the lower prongs, the central one signifies the empty essence of being, the right one its lucid nature, and the left one its all-pervasive responsiveness—that is, the three aspects of timeless awareness. The hub of the vajra symbolizes the fact that the fresh state of awareness—the Truth of the Path that perfects these three aspects of timeless awareness (which abide within the ground of being) as the three kayas of the fruition state—causes the unified key points of the paths of trekchö and tögal to be experienced simultaneously. The value here lies in understanding the significance of the stance, since this frees you from the shackles of your biased opinions that arbitrarily divide samsara from nirvana. Regardless of which of these two versions you practice, you should feel that your mind and body have completely become the vajra, without any residue.

The latter part of the source text indicates that the exercise of the "unchanging vajra stance," along with its value and practical techniques, is very clearly set out in the teaching manual entitled *Timeless Awareness as the Lama* (*Yeshé Lama*), so you should practice it as discussed in that manual. This physical training, which employs extraordinary auspicious interdependence, definitely does not entail a great deal of activity or involvement with less purpose or value, as do prostrations, circumambulations, ritual dances, mudras, exercises to harness subtle energies in the channels, and so forth. It is the exceptional and very proximate cause for subtle energy and ordinary mind to cease, allows you to identify the utterly lucid nature of mind, and frees your body into an inexhaustible body of light.

Verbal Training

Second, sitting up straight on a comfortable seat, meditate while thinking very clearly, "To turn my speech away from samsaric usage, and instead to attain the speech vajra of buddhahood, I will embark on this path!" Pray to your lama with intense devotion and blend your mind with the lama's.

Next, as you abide in the lama's essence, clearly visualize a small blue *Hung*, shining with five-colored light, in your heart center, seeing this to be the essence of timeless awareness, abiding as the ground of being. When your consciousness is resting evenly, recite the sound of "Hung" alternately loudly and softly. If you become drowsy, increase the force, and if you are agitated, recite more softly and slowly. Adjusting in this way, use *Hung* chanted to a melody as an invocation. Many such *Hung*s issue from it, coming out your right nostril. Mediate that as they simply touch everything around you—people, objects, your residence—all become *Hung*s that resound with their natural sound.

Then *Hung* syllables emanate to the limits of your imagination, transforming the universe entirely into the forms and sounds of *Hung,* as far as your mind can encompass. Resounding with their own sound, these *Hung*s are drawn in. Some enter your body through your left nostril, while some dissolve into it from the outside, so that your body, including even the tips of your hairs, your subtle energy, and your mind, become nothing but the forms and sounds of *Hung*.

Next, the *Hung*s resolve back into the basic *Hung*. That, too, resolves into basic space and you relax. Practice this until you feel that anything that appears in your postmeditation consciousness arises as *Hung*s.

If you cannot cut through your habit of investing things with substantiality, or if you become fixated on the appearance of the *Hung,* envision that many dark blue *Hung*s of many random sizes, blazing with fire, emanate from your heart center (with you in your ordinary form). All of these are far more powerful than great lightning bolts from the sky, and by their very nature they blast away your body, subtle energy, and mind, as well as the habitual patterns underlying them, leaving no trace. Likewise, they blast away the entire external universe. Finally, the *Hung*s fade away into their own ground, so that all phenomena become of one taste with the basic space of phenomena—supreme emptiness. Rest in equipoise within awareness that

does not reify things. Strive until you experience all sensory appearances in your postmeditation awareness as evanescent “bits” of pristine emptiness.

This extraordinary verbal training acts more swiftly than other methods of recitation and mantra repetition or breathing techniques (such as the “vajra repetition” and the vase breath). It is a most excellent means of radically cutting through the entanglements of your ordinary mind, and so you should understand it to be the proximate cause for your mind and body vanishing like mist.

Mental Training

Third, sit up straight on a comfortable seat. Meditate while thinking very clearly, “To turn my mind away from samsara, and instead to attain the mind vajra of buddhahood, I will come to a definitive conclusion about mind itself!” Pray one-pointedly to your lama with intense devotion and blend your mind with the lama’s.

As you sit with mind and body relaxed, think as follows, without letting your attention wander to anything else. The phenomena of samsara and nirvana, whether positive or negative, come about due to the influence of what is merely a process of interdependent connection—the respective causes and conditions of these phenomena coming together quite adventitiously and acting on one another. No matter how these limitless phenomena manifest in all their variety, as distinct causes and results, it is ordinary conceptual consciousness that imposes order on, or arranges, all such appearances and possibilities. They have never actually existed in the slightest. That consciousness, moreover, is such that there are thoughts of all kinds—positive, negative, and neutral—which seem to exist, are clear and distinct, but do not actually exist at all, for they are merely imputed. They occur as something new where there was nothing before, remain, and then cease, only to reappear anew, in a uninterrupted process.

You might wonder how things come about. By the coming together of a flawless sense faculty, a sense object present within its sphere, and a consciousness that is an open avenue for the arising of a perception, things occur as though they actually exist, whereas although they are clearly apparent they are in fact ineffable, like

people seen in an illusion. It is absolutely impossible that they have some authentic origin—some cause that can stand up under scrutiny and about which you could say, "They come from this and this alone." They are devoid of such a cause.

You might wonder how things remain in the interim. These things that are merely ineffable appearances, no matter how long or short a time they last, are similar to people seen in an illusion. They do not actually abide in any fixed way at all, and so thoughts are devoid of individual essence.

And you might wonder how things finally go away. These adventitious, though all-consuming, thoughts—thus unborn and not abiding in any fixed way—seem to go away due to circumstances no longer sustaining them. However, just as horses, elephants, and other images that appear in illusions cannot come back once they have vanished, thoughts that are similar to former ones certainly couldn't be the results specific to those former thoughts. Thus, thoughts are devoid of result.

Therefore, these mere appearances, devoid of cause, result, or individual essence, take the form (in the ordinary relative mind) of things subject to the three phases of being born, remaining, and ceasing, or of occurring, lasting, and then going away. But no matter how many such forms arise, even in arising they have never, on any ultimate level, been part of such transition or change. Understanding this situation is termed "realizing mind itself." The extent to which spiritual practitioners become familiar with this is the extent to which they will be purified of all that is to be renounced—the distorted negative thoughts based on delusion, attachment, aversion, and so forth. And all that is to be accomplished—faith, diligence, compassion, sublime knowing, and so forth—will infallibly develop more and more, as a matter of course. Understanding the ultimate level correctly in no way contradicts the interdependence of the relative level. Not only that, but it has the purpose of lending certainty to your making correct moral choices.

These pith instructions on training the mind are far more profound than other forms of spiritual practice. They constitute the great central axis that is the unerring and noble path to total freedom and omniscience, for they are the indispensable means in the Great Perfection approach of making originally pure awareness fully

evident. Thus, fortunate people who have not lost sight of this training should put it into practice with great devotion.

The Key Point

At this juncture, when you are coming to a definitive conclusion about mind itself—the ultimate way of abiding—you must relinquish what is to be abandoned (that is, all-consuming thoughts and the objects on which they are fixated) as being without basis or foundation. As well, even the physical, verbal, and mental training you have just finished is illustrative of the countless ways you strive at pursuing your spiritual path (such as the stages of development and completion), whether these lead to what is inexhaustible or to what is still subject to degeneration. You come to a decisive experience concerning all of this when you have no fixed frame of reference whatsoever, for none of this has ever existed within the basic space of phenomena, the way of abiding.

Ordinary beings are confused in that they fail to realize this. All the activities you deliberately undertake—renouncing what is to be abandoned, applying antidotes, and so forth—are simply illusory modes of expression, methods to free beings' mindstreams completely. As such, even as these activities manifest without the slightest hindrance, like a playful display of marvelous illusions, they are of "equal taste," for they constitute the playful dance of the basic space of phenomena, completely pure and utterly lucid. Knowing this to be so, you must nevertheless take a firm, though wholly relaxed, stance of mindful awareness that does not waver from that basic space. This is the aorta, as it were—the consummate key point—of the Great Perfection path, and so you should strive in all ways to implement it properly as your path, not mixing it with other schools of thought. You should strive until you come to the decision that consciousness itself, which engages in these many kinds of physical, verbal, and mental training, is without basis or foundation.

At the close of your practice sessions, sincerely recite prayers of dedication and aspiration, and apply your individual spiritual practice between sessions, training in a steady and uncompromising way to remain mindful, alert, and careful.

The Main Practice

Second, the main practice entails both the actual path and the auxiliary practices.

The Actual Path

The actual path consists of two approaches—spiritual practice that relies on original purity as the essence of being and spiritual practice that relies on spontaneous presence as naturally manifest appearances. In this regard, the practical applications found in the main Great Perfection approach are ways of forging the spiritual path solely with uncontrived awareness in all its nakedness. So, in this context of the most secret and unsurpassable cycle of the category of Direct Transmission, there is no new state of freedom to be brought about by the spiritual path, for primordially awareness never entails confusion. The path of trekchö is the means of resting in equipoise that is the essence of timelessly free awareness and, within that state, of allowing subtle energy and ordinary mind—which function as aspects of beings' confusion, corrupting that state with adventitious distortions that obscure it—to become naturally free. The path of tögal is the means of making fully evident the undistorted and naturally manifest appearances that derive and are inseparable from the essence of that awareness. The latter path is based on such a special doctrine that teachings up to and including the secret cycle are unable to define it exactly as it is.

The Path of Trekchö

The first path, that of spiritual practice that relies on original purity, has three parts—reaching decisiveness through view, practical implementation through meditation, and enrichment through conduct.

In the first place, this secret of mind—awareness itself—is such that nothing or no one is responsible for contriving it, for it is a vast, spacious expanse, free of elaboration, timelessly without basis or foundation, and completely beyond all substance or characterization. This is referred to as "the empty essence" (*ngo-wo tong-pa*).

The nature of awareness is such that it is far more exalted than other states of consciousness, such as the so-called ground of all ordinary experience (*kun-zhi*)—that is to say, consciousness as that ground, and all the rest of what is known to be the basis for adventitious habitual patterns, both positive and negative in all their variety—or the sense consciousnesses, which do not involve conceptual thought. Awareness exhibits a natural lucidity, without transition or change, that is timelessly free of all the distortions of concepts that obscure it. As soon as this lucidity becomes fully evident, it is clearly the supreme epitome of a spontaneously present and natural quality of knowing—a function of the inner lucidity of this essence that is uncontrived and primordial. This is referred to as "the lucid nature" (*rang-zhin sal-wa*).

Emptiness and lucidity are not two things that simply abide interdependently. Rather, they are mutually pervasive, timelessly inseparable as an essence of one taste, from which it is impossible for them ever to stray in the slightest. This is the supreme primordial unity of awareness and emptiness, eternal and sacred, the natural dynamic energy of which is timeless awareness that manifests clearly and outwardly, free of all restriction or localization. If you realize it, you are a buddha, and if not, you are an ordinary being. Its expressions arise ceaselessly as all phenomena of the animate and inanimate universe. It is timelessly all-pervasive and infinitely extensive, for in its fundamentally unconditioned nature it does not abide in any fixed way at all. This is referred to as "all-pervasive responsiveness" (*tuk-jé kun-chap*).

It is true enough that all phenomena, which are the manifestations of this dynamic energy, seem to be separate from one another. But in fact they are nothing

other than the primordial unity of awareness and emptiness—the way of abiding—and so the term "supreme threefold inseparability" (*nam-sum yer-mé chen-po*) is used.

This is not a matter of fragmentation, however—of emptiness being something left in the aftermath when your reification of things as having true existence has been undermined, of lucidity being a clear mind that understands that emptiness, or simply of the bringing together in union of some previously existent object and some subjective agent that then experiences that object. Rather, awareness free of elaboration is such that in essence it is timelessly empty, for it cannot be divided under any circumstances. Its nature is an inherent lucidity, naturally occurring and free of ordinary consciousness, without any agent having to make it so. As for what seems to be the separateness of some already existent object and some subjective agent that then experiences it, this is only an inseparability that has always been so. There is no need for anyone—buddha or ordinary being—to use any method to make emptiness so, to make lucidity so, or to make them come together in some kind of union. This uncontrived state of primordial unity is not subject to any transition or change. Forget about your ordinary consciousness trying to invest it with true existence—no adventitous state of mind whatsoever, even one that tries to reify it as something having *no* true existence, can perceive it; nor would there be any need to even if it could.

Even though there is nothing in the slightest that could be characterized as something to be realized or someone to realize it, you can be introduced directly to this fact in the immediacy of your own experience, so that all flaws of speculation ("Is it this or not?") are cut through as a matter of course in that immediacy, with no context for hesitation or doubt. If such an experience does not occur, what point is there in simply engaging a concept of something labeled "original purity"? Ideally, you realize it just as it is. In average cases, you have some positive and direct meditative experience of it. At the very least, however, it is imperative that you understand to some degree this secret key point, on which everything hinges and which is so unlike anything found in any other school of thought based on characteristics formulated by ordinary consciousness.

In earlier times and up to the present, such direct introduction may have taken place in the context of empowerments—for example, when a qualified master and qualified students came together. Even if that was not the case, people have heard the presentation of this section of pith instructions, from the first topic of the preliminaries up to the present one, and if they will only put it into practice, of course they will gain realization through these means. In particular, expressing sincere devotion for your lama during a single short session is preferable to spending a long time engaging in other kinds of mental training, so don't let your attention go too far afield. If you decide, once and for all, that devotion for your lama is the single means sufficient to bring you realization of mind itself, and at all times and under all circumstances strive at that, you will gain enormous benefit without the slightest danger or contradiction. But if you place your hopes in what gods or demons may be up to, or in men's talk and women's asses, I have no idea where that might lead you.

People may prattle about ideas such as "There is no one to see and nothing to be seen," but what is to be realized from that, since the teachings and the individual are divorced from one another? Such people are definitely at odds with the teachings. Therefore, you should strive your whole life at something even as small as a prayer of positive aspiration to realize the very nature of mind in an authentic way.

Meditation

In the second place, from the point at which you first understand the essence of awareness until you awaken to buddhahood within the inner lucidity of primordial basic space, you should train uninterruptedly, day and night, so that your meditation touches on the key point, without indulging in contriving or corrupting that awareness through any other means, any deliberate application of ideas. So do not move around a lot or engage in various physical exercises, but adopt a stable posture, like a mountain. By relying on this, you lay the foundation for your meditation, and so sit up straight but keep your body relaxed, with your gaze resting steadily and directly in front. Cut off all speech and, while your awareness abides without wavering, let your breath flow completely naturally, without restricting it.

If you feel that your awareness is going to be corrupted by some experience of mental laxity, focus intently on breathing through your mouth and pausing after the outbreath. When experiences of mental agitation arise, hold the vase breath gently and focus intently on the inner retention of your subtle energy and mind. The expression "to focus intently" (*ar-la tay-pa*) means to direct subtle energy and mind into basic space; in this case, it is sufficient to direct your subtle energy and mind within the immediacy of awareness. Since subtle energy and mind go hand in hand, if your subtle energy is wild, your mind will be disturbed and will vacillate, like waves on a lake. When your subtle energy is calm, your mind will not shift, but will be like a lake without waves. It is subtle energy that causes your body and mind to stir, so the key point of subtle energy is very important.

If you do not adopt a state of imperturbable rest from the outset, however much you succumb to moving and shifting your body—whether for good or ill—you will only fuel the momentum of your subtle energy, which will undermine your imperturbable state of rest later on. The disturbances of mind and body by subtle energy obscure the essence of awareness, prevent realization, and make meditation uncomfortable, thus undermining your subsequent state of imperturbable rest. It is therefore very important to let your body, speech, and mind rest effortlessly.

Furthermore, this subsequent state of imperturbable rest is the pivotal axis of this spiritual path. So recognize the way in which this inseparability of basic space and awareness is always naturally lucid and free of transition or change. Use any means to understand, experience, or realize it. Such recognition comes only from intuitive meditation—that is, resting naturally in utter relaxation, free of all the contrived and corrupting functions of ordinary consciousness. Take this to be the core of your spiritual practice and so make sure you have a firm foundation.

Even if you maintain uncontrived awareness in its fresh natural state for only a short time, regardless of what expressions of its dynamic energy manifest—be they positive or negative, subtle or obvious—do not engage in any speculation about them, much less fixate on or reify them. Rather, if you let them go without any fixed point of reference or restriction, there will be no context for the arising of hope or fear or any tendency to invest them with true existence. Without such supports, it will be

impossible for you to stray from the purification of all this in its own ground, and so it is all right not to engage in any deliberate attempt to bring about freedom. As the momentum of these dynamic expressions of awareness plays itself out, lucidity and stability will increase more and more, until you come to a consummate level of stability from which there is no turning back. In order for this to happen, you must meditate without deviating for an instant from the three states of imperturbable rest. As much as you gain a more lucid and stable experience of awareness, that much will all the corrupting effects of your ordinary mind's confusion (which is only the dynamic energy of that awareness) be effortlessly purified. At the same time, the subtle energy of your karma will become naturally purified, while the pure aspect of your subtle energy and mind will gain strength. Gradually you will become free of the physical blockages in your channels and all the other physical factors that contribute to degeneration. Once you are completely purified of these, your body will no longer be threatened by anything harmful. In short, in this and other ways, your perceptions and ordinary mind will be brought as a matter of course within the scope of awareness, so that everything you do will turn out to be the authentic spiritual path and, without trying to, you will become someone with inherent mastery over your perceptions of naturally manifest appearances.

You might feel that this approach is no different from looking outwardly at appearances arising as dynamic energy and then trying to determine their basis, because (you say) they constitute all-pervasive responsiveness or supreme threefold inseparability. But this is like forgetting the root while searching for the branches. It is like tracking down an elephant without knowing that the elephant is in your home, or not being satisfied even if you know this. You still hope that there is something to find, but you only veer farther away from the main practice of this path.

Briefly, then, if you do not establish the basis for the main path specific to trekchö solely through the imperturbable resting of awareness, how will you achieve it through some other, ordinary state of mind? You might feel that it is all the same to forge a path to emptiness through intellectual speculation, exercises that involve holding the breath, or methods that involve "melting bliss."[18] But how, then, would the Great Perfection approach be any different from other paths? These other

methods do not even come close to a state of imperturbable rest, let alone serve as its equivalent. Not only that, but if your awareness strays in the immediacy of its dynamic energy, what else can you expect? The subtle energy and ordinary mind that are expressions of that dynamic energy become lost in the immediate experience of specific external sense objects, and so you fall under the sway of negative habit patterns and become emotionally afflicted by fixating on this and that. If you direct the conscious quality of that dynamic energy in the slightest to analyzing the essence of awareness, you are not holding to the natural state of awareness exactly as it is. So you should rest imperturbably in the freshness of awareness free of concepts.

At any point, whether you are maintaining awareness or simply experiencing your mind at rest, the tendency of subtle energy to express itself can result in ephemeral states of mind, whether positive experiences (such as bliss, lucidity, or nonconceptual awareness) or negative ones (such as violent passion or aggression). In addition, it can give rise to many visionary experiences, both positive (such as the empty forms of the ten signs of successful practice)[19] and negative (such as manifestations of gods or demons). But there are definitely individuals for whom such experiences do not arise. If they arise, however, and you follow after them, you are behaving like a child chasing a rainbow, only to trip on a stone and fall headlong. For what are these experiences except ways for your attachment to express itself? So you must treat everything as being of equal taste in the immediacy of awareness, free of all hope and fear.

Anything whatsoever can arise in the experience of someone immersed in genuine being, but those who indulge in a lot of hope and fear, joy and sorrow, about any of it, or who babble about it to others, have not truly grasped or fathomed what it is to practice. So they are only displaying signs of their spiritual poverty, and what is the point of that? Although there may be much to know, if there is not much to talk about, what great harm could there be in that? We find references, in the Great Perfection and other approaches, to "nonmeditation." This term means that once you have realized the way of abiding, if you rest in that state of equipoise you need not seek some other form of meditation based on the ordinary characteristics of things. To put it another way, once you are familiar with meditative equipoise and have

perfected that dynamic experience, even if you do not deliberately meditate, the meaning of what it is to meditate grows in and of itself, as a matter of course. But this term “nonmeditation” does not mean “don’t practice”!

It is certainly true that some fortunate people who have undergone previous training are said to gain realization and familiarity all at once, as it were. How could such people indulge in nonspiritual distractions? The measure of freedom that the teachings discuss is a reference to what will happen if an individual who is never separate from the teachings strives in an authentic manner. This is not to say that there is no chance of freedom if it doesn’t happen in quite that way, or that from then on there is absolutely no need to practice. Therefore, it is unacceptable to behave like those who have lost their way, giving lip service to “nonmeditation” while wasting their lives entirely on distractions. It is definitely necessary both to meditate and to gain familiarity with the process just as the holy masters of the past did, meditating with an intensity born of the courage to meet the challenges of that process. Now, while you are still alive and have some control over your situation, you must pray from the depths of your heart with the noble aspiration that you will be able to meditate until you die, whether or not you have meditative experiences and realizations, and so become a fortunate person who will meditate uninterruptedly until you gain enlightenment.

Conduct

In the third place, many kinds of conduct benefit your view and meditation in the trekchö approach. In brief, however, there is a fundamental need to renounce all kinds of negative attitudes and actions. With that as your basis, this extraordinary practice is the ultimate in what is positive and cuts through the momentum that results from harmful actions. But if you exert yourself in other forms of positive behavior, involving physical, verbal, or mental effort, due to the stirring of your subtle energy and ordinary mind in those directions, they will prove to be hindrances to the stability and unfolding of your awareness. In this context, then, you must allow

all positive and negative efforts, which cause your energy and mind to stir, to rest in their genuine nature.

To engage in this conduct, appreciating the unity of basic space and awareness without straying from it and without interruption, is to train simultaneously in the careful conduct of a monarch ruling his or her domain and the secret conduct of one who experiences the inseparability and equal taste of all phenomena—whether they manifest as nominally positive or negative—within the immediacy of awareness. Training in perfecting both of these at once is an indispensable support to the fundamental implementation of the main practice. You should devote yourself entirely to this, step by step, both in practice sessions and in the periods between them.

On this note, however, you might think, “All the effort made in accepting and rejecting things, as spoken of in all the spiritual approaches, is of no benefit, to no advantage, and without any value,” and so reject these moral choices out of hand, denying their validity. But you must never, even for an instant, think this way! Individuals whose minds are never satisfied by anything less than the most sublime spiritual practice, free of elaboration, should nonetheless spend the periods between their meditation sessions in a totally sincere pursuit of whatever positive activity most inspires them.

The Path of Tögal

In the second place, connected with the foregoing approach is the swift path of tögal, which allows perceptions based on confusion to arise as the naturally manifest visions of timeless awareness. This path has three aspects—some elucidation of the secret key points of the spontaneous presence of utter lucidity, the methods for forging the path, and the pith instructions for dispelling hindrances and enriching your practice.

The Secret Key Points

First, in the unsurpassable vajrayana approach, the pivotal axis of this "shortcut" path lies initially in all the skillful means of the development stage (*kyé-rim*). By basing your path on the forms of deities, which are expressions of timeless awareness, you primarily refine away obscurations that affect you on the physical level. In addition, there are the methods of mantra repetition for specific deities, as well as auxiliary practices, all of which bring about freedom in this lifetime, in the bardo, or in some future lifetime. This is all subsumed under the three phases of approach (*nyen-pa*), accomplishment (*drub-pa*), and enactment (*lay-jor*).

On the basis of that, moreover, the sublime knowing of the profound stage of completion (*dzok-rim*) entails basing the path on the deity's enlightened mind—dharmakaya. With this, you primarily refine your subtle energy and ordinary mind, and so this, too, is a way of gaining freedom, in this lifetime or at the moment of death.

The results of your accomplishment while following this path are the illusory body (which derives from realization and familiarity with both the foreshadowing of an experience of utter lucidity and the actual experience) and the embodiment of timeless awareness (a state of primordial unity experienced while you are still on the path of learning). All of this constitutes means of progressing further and further toward supreme, primordial unity, in which no more learning is necessary. There are also the means of attaining the four levels of a rigdzin. Each of these many means seems more profound than the last.

In the present case, the special means of introducing you directly to awareness are empowerment and the lama's blessings. When these come together with the student's devotion and other factors, the superb interdependence ensures that you will be introduced directly to the sacred secret of mind—the very nature of mind as dharmakaya—in a manner consistent with your personal share of merit. By maintaining that introduction in your ongoing experience, you refine away the impure aspects of subtle energy and ordinary mind, the distortions that affect your body, speech, and mind. Ideally, within this lifetime you ensure that when the experience of the utter lucidity of emptiness arises at the moment of death, you will make the direct, unobstructed ascent to manifest enlightenment within primordial inner basic space.

Even trekchö by itself can confer this attainment. If you practice the path of tögal, moreover, this ensures that you will traverse the entire path to its consummation. One model of practice found in the tantras is that of gaining some degree of abiding in, stabilizing, or gaining freedom in originally pure timeless awareness as emptiness and then, on the basis of that, embarking on the path of tögal.

Another model is based on spontaneous presence as the nature of the originally pure essence of being. Within this, dharmakaya as timeless awareness (the open, unceasing avenue for the knowing quality that abides within the ground of being) and rupakaya (the open, unceasing avenue for the manifest quality that abides within that ground) remain steadfast in the one taste of their inseparability, as the extremely subtle essence of inner lucidity. On the basis of words, you are directly introduced to some understanding of this, and by means of symbols you are directly introduced to the luminous visions. As a fortunate student, right from the start you begin applying the means that make evident, in a very direct way, the supreme visionary experiences of undistorted spontaneous presence. Given the harmony that exists between the key points of the avenue and field of your experience, your subtle energy, and your awareness, it is impossible for you not to perceive these luminous visions of empty forms.

On this note, there would seem to be some similarity between these forms and the "pure empty forms" discussed in the *Kalachakra Tantra*. But in actuality, the dorjé lu-gu-gyü is in essence enlightened form; the lamp of empty tiglés (*tig-lé tong-pai drön-ma*), the immeasurable mansion; and the outer and inner fields of totally pure basic space, the pure realm. These facts are not mentioned in the Kalachakra teachings. The Great Perfection tantras do not even speak of the arising of many forms of goddesses, let alone state that it is necessary to enjoy bliss with the symbolic consort made of light. So the paths are different, one involving effort and the other effortless. As well, the two approaches are in essence distinct. In the former approach, there is the adventitious arising of empty forms as a sign that subtle energy has been channeled and controlled through the path of skillful means. In the latter,

there is the arising of the genuine radiance of awareness, which becomes outwardly clear by reliance on skillful means.

With that distinction as a basis, if a student who directly perceives the visions of tögal meditates without hesitation according to the lama's instructions, there are several factors at work. There is the "lamp of flesh in the heart center" (*tsitta sha'i drön-ma*), which is the array of genuine enlightened forms and pure realms that abides within the ground of being as a lucid manifestation of light in the center of your heart. There is the "lamp of the smooth, transparent subtle channel" (*kar-jam tsa'i drön-ma*), the pathway by which this array moves, or is projected, outward—the kati channel that branches up and penetrates the eyes, and is compared to a crystal tube or to white silken strands rolled into a fine thread. There is the "far-reaching lasso of the water lamp" (*gyang-zhak chu'i drön-ma*), the avenue through which the array emerges—that is, the extremities of the kati channel, whether they are open or closed, within which the luminous visions abide, unobstructed, unobscured, and unceasing. Finally, there is the "subtle energy that serves as the life force of sublime knowing" (*she-rab sok-tu gyur-pa'i lung*), a genuine subtle energy abiding within the hollow channels of light and causing the luminous visions to emerge, or to be aroused. These factors manifest distinctly but never stray from the essence that is awareness—timeless awareness itself. And so the key point—the infallible truth of the nature of phenomena—ensures that even if you have not yet perceived the supreme emptiness that is original purity, you will perceive it just as it is at this point, when practicing the path of the luminous visions. This is the other model of practice found in the tantras.

The consummate key point of this path is for you to come to the final stage at which phenomena resolve, by focusing intently on the luminous visions, and your conscious awareness of them, within the supreme state beyond ordinary consciousness—the basic space of phenomena, which entails no concepts and is free of elaboration. However, if you do not have the highest acumen and the stability born of familiarization, it will be difficult, simply by resting in an utterly relaxed way in the essence of awareness, to take a firm stance that does not waver from that basic space. One method, however, is to rest with utter relaxation in the immediacy of

awareness, experiencing the luminous visions through the fresh mindfulness that is the dynamic energy of that awareness, while neither engaging in the least conceptual speculation about the visions nor fixating on them. This method includes the key points of the path of trekchö.

Besides, what need is there to hold any bias regarding awareness, which is free of restriction or bias—that it is inside or outside the body, or whatever—or to think of the luminous visions as solid, since they are essentially the embodiments of timeless awareness? So direct your fresh, mindful attention—the dynamic energy of awareness—toward the lu-gu-gyü. As that appears, limpid and clear, within the confines of the lamp of the empty tiglés, focus intently as a way of ensuring that you do not waver from it, concentrating your gaze and subtle energy as though they were melting into it. If you become familiar with this method, to the degree that you gain stability in it, to that degree the essence of your inner awareness will acquire stability as a matter of course. This is the method that principally summarizes the key points of the path of spontaneous presence. In any case, it is necessary that the originally pure essence is elicited in all its nakedness during your practice of the path, so that you are brought to the level of freedom within ultimate basic space, which effortlessly becomes fully evident.

If you cannot bring the four visions to consummation in this lifetime through the practice of tögal, freedom will come about very easily in the bardo, when the visions of utter lucidity arise, if you have trained your mind in the present life to incorporate these visions into your spiritual path. This is because the bardo is the specific context in which a connection with the originally pure ground of freedom itself comes about very easily, for under the circumstances the bardo is a gap between the physical embodiment of your former life and that of your future one, and even the mental body of the latter phase of the bardo has yet to arise.

The Great Perfection tantras speak of the "naturally manifest sambhogakaya of buddhahood." I have not seen this discussed in any of the other tantras that were brought to Tibet and that can still be consulted, but who knows what tantras existed in the past in the holy country of India or what there may be in other realms. Only an omniscient being has the scope to fathom the extent of what these texts teach.

Claiming that there is no naturally manifest sambhogakaya for those who awaken to buddhahood by following other paths would be most improper, for to begin with, the pure realms of victorious ones in their limitless array are inseparable and of one taste. All we can say, it would seem, is that the vajrakaya of supreme transference is a feature unique to the consummation of tögal. The scope of buddhahood—that is something that no one but a buddha can assess accurately.

Thus, the spontaneously present nature that is timeless awareness, the most secret of all secrets, is supreme utter lucidity, which manifests naturally as enlightened forms and pure realms, uncorrupted by any distortion, without bias or division. It abides as a natural attribute in the makeup of one to be guided on this path. This consummate and swift path, which in the present moment makes this attribute fully evident in one's direct perception and in a way that surpasses ordinary experience, is without equal and is not considered in other approaches. Thus, you should undertake the practical implementation of this path, with faith and devotion that come from recognizing what is for what it is.

The Methods of Tögal

Second, to implement the actual path in a practical way, concentrate on the key points of body, speech, and mind, and through the three other key points incorporate your direct perception of naturally indwelling utter lucidity—the essence of the kayas and timeless awareness—into this visionary path. Ultimately you will be brought to the primordial point at which phenomena resolve.

The key point of the body concerns the dharmakaya posture (like the proud bearing of a lion), the sambhogakaya posture (like that of a sleeping elephant), and the nirmanakaya posture (like that of a rishi sitting with knees drawn up while cultivating meditative stability). Train in detail in these postures as described in the practical manuals of the heart drop teachings that unerringly explain the meaning of the tantras. Never relinquishing one or another of these three postures, strive continuously day and night not to let your body shift or move in the slightest.

The key point of speech is to cut off all talk and to draw up the lower subtle energy and hold it with moderate force, while exhaling the upper energy through your mouth and then pausing to rest gently. When you inhale again do so very gently, and when you exhale do so with a very slight force. Train in this continuously and without distraction.

The key point of mind is to reach a decision by recognizing that the natural luminosity of self-knowing timeless awareness, to which you were directly introduced, is solely an appearance that manifests naturally. Do not speculate about this, but rest without contrivance so that you are brought finally to originally pure basic space, the naturally indwelling unity of awareness and emptiness. Even if you have not yet realized the essence of awareness, gaze steadfastly while letting your mind enter into the embrace, into the very center, of the luminous visions in general, and the dorjé lu-gu-gyü in particular. Do not indulge in the slightest conceptual speculation about these visions—neither hope nor fear, denial nor affirmation—but let your conscious awareness melt into and blend with them, training gradually in the means of keeping the lu-gu-gyü within the field of basic space. This is a sacred key point.

As for the key point concerning the objective field that is the basis for the arising of the visions, in general this is a clear sky without any obscuring conditions. In particular, in the daytime, focus about a hand's width, a cubit, or the width of a drawn bow below the dharmakaya support—the sun free of clouds. At night, focus on the center of either the sambhogakaya support—the moon free of clouds—or the nirmanakaya support—a lamp that burns brightly without flickering in the wind. It is important to rely on an objective field and never to be separate from it, until the visionary experiences arise even if you do not use it as a condition for them to do so. Of all of these fields, rely primarily on the one that suits your constitution, allows the five colors of light to arise easily, and brings the greatest increase and stability to the visions. Alternatively, there are methods of meditating in a room with a slight opening to let light in, or even in a darkened room.

As for the key point concerning the avenue of experience which ensures that the visions arise, the avenue by which consciousness perceives forms is the eyes, without any flaw. With the ordinary physically oriented vision, tainted as it is by

adventitious distortions, nothing but the nearest obvious material objects are clearly perceived, so how could these visionary experiences be perceived? Even with the visionary capacity that is developed through meditative stability, these visions are not perceived, for such capacity is still not beyond the scope of an adventitious sense faculty and consciousness. But this doesn't necessarily mean that an ordinary person is deprived of the avenue by which one perceives the visionary experiences. The indestructible sphere of being in the core of one's heart center allows the natural radiance of awareness to pass through the great channels of timeless awareness, which penetrate the eyes, so that one directly perceives the flawless luminous visions.

As you become familiar with the dharmakaya gaze—keeping both eyes rolled upward slightly—the dorjé lu-gu-gyü will stay wherever you direct it with your awareness, and you will perceive the full measure of the three kayas perfected as visions on the path. As you become familiar with the sambhogakaya gaze—keeping both eyes straight ahead and then gently drawing your gaze off to one side and holding it there with slight effort—you will directly perceive natural manifestations of the genuine nature of phenomena, the subtle energy of your karma will subside naturally, and many larger and smaller tiglés will arise in your direct perception, as your experience of the essence of timeless awareness evolves. As you become familiar with the nirmanakaya gaze—keeping your eyes lowered slightly and eyelids almost closed—your confused perception of sense objects as separate and divided from one another will cease, and you will never be separate from the vision of the true indwelling nature of awareness.

With any of these three gazing techniques, do not close your eyes completely or blink. Gaze in an utterly relaxed way, without your eyes moving, striving continuously day and night until the luminous visions arise even when you are not using a gazing technique.

Regardless of how large or small the luminous visions are, if the vision of the direct perception of the nature of phenomena arises as five-colored light, do not let your gaze shift from it. If white is predominant, draw your eyes slightly to the right and hold them there; if yellow, turn them upward; if red, lower them; if green, draw them to the left; and if dark blue, focus your gaze on the center and hold it there. If

the shapes of light arise in vertical rays, lower your eyes; if in spokes, draw the shapes toward you; if circular, draw your eyes to the left; if square, draw them to the right; if half-moon-shaped, turn them upward; and if triangular, lower them. If shapes like clusters of drops, lotuses, pavilions, fortresses, concentric circles, or coils of joy arise, direct your gaze without wavering from them.

For the visionary experiences to remain stable, direct your conscious awareness and eyes one-pointedly at nothing but the lu-gu-gyü, striving to place it in the center of the luminous vision and not to waver from it. This is a sacred key point.

To ensure that the luminous visions evolve, gently lead them upward, downward, to the right and left, and in between. In the morning, lead them from the eastern direction toward the south, and in the afternoon from the west toward the north. (Women should lead them from the east to the north in the morning, and from the west to the south in the afternoon.) If they become unclear, direct your attention again to the objective field and learn gradually to lead the clear visions without impairing them. As a means of allowing the lamp of empty tiglés to arise easily, gaze evenly with both eyes balanced between tension and laxity. Since the visionary experiences are within the province of your direct perceptual experience, it is very important to concentrate on this key point concerning the avenue of experience that ensures that the visions arise.

You who forge your spiritual path with firm conviction might repeat the exercises to “delineate the gap” (*ru-shen*) from time to time, but otherwise during all those sessions in which you actually meditate using the supreme and sublime approach of tögal—the path of utter lucidity—rest gently, adopting one of the postures and using one of the gazing techniques. Other than this, do not move in the least. Act like a mute, cutting off the entire flow of speech. And rest in your natural state, without the ordinary mind indulging in the slightest speculation about the outer and inner unity of basic space and awareness. In these ways, you will lay the foundation for your spiritual practice.

In the periods between sessions, moreover, you should keep physical movement to a minimum, but if any is necessary it should be gentle and relaxed. Do not talk out

loud. Instead, train your speculating conceptual mind to rest directly on the lu-gu-gyü without distraction.

As to the site, an inferior place is low-lying, so that the view of the sky is restricted or the view to the east and west is limited by mountains, so that you must look upward to see the sun's rays. Average places are slightly more elevated, so that more of the sky can be seen, and the view to the east and west extends further, with hills of moderate height, so that you need to gaze upward only slightly at the sun. In the best places, you can sit on a hilltop, for example, with an extensive view of the sky, and the view to the east and west extends very far, with low hills, so that you can gaze straight out at the sun's rays.

As for your physical constitution, if heat predominates and you experience your consciousness becoming extremely lax, emphasize the dharmakaya posture and gazing technique. If heat and cold are mixed or balanced and you experience laxity and agitation alternately, strive by using the sambhogakaya posture and gazing technique. And if cold predominates and you experience strong mental agitation, use primarily the nirmanakaya posture and gazing technique.

As for the key point concerning the unity of basic space and awareness, which is how the visions arise, the very nature of mind—inner basic space—is in essence originally pure, primordial timeless awareness that is all-pervasive and ever-present supreme emptiness, free of elaboration. Awareness as inner lucidity is by nature spontaneously present, uncompounded timeless awareness that is indwelling but not dull. All-pervasive awareness as responsiveness is the basis for the arising of the visions, unceasing timeless awareness beyond all restriction or bias. Essence, nature, and responsiveness—these abide fundamentally and timelessly as natural attributes within the essence of awakened mind, and so this self-knowing awareness, instantaneous and unobstructed in all its nakedness, is the epitome of them. As for being any better or worse, or any more or less, there is in essence not the slightest distinction among the limitless beings in the six states (whether they are high, low, or middling forms of life), the yogins who are practitioners on the paths and levels of realization, and all the buddhas who are endowed with twofold purity. None of these beings are ever without this awareness, for even an instant. Rather, there is a unity

that is beyond union and separation, for that purity permeates them completely—sacred, eternal, abiding timelessly and coemergent with being itself. If any individuals who follow the spiritual path realize and become familiar with awareness, they swiftly gain freedom, while ordinary beings who do not realize and become familiar with it fail to escape the external influences imposed by their perpetual, though adventitious, confusion. Awareness itself—inner basic space—is, as it were, the ground of both freedom and confusion.

The unity of basic space and awareness that becomes evident outwardly, as translucent shapes and colors of light, arises gently in your direct perception as the object of the subtle sense faculty, so that even the radiance of awareness—the dorjé lu-gu-gyü—like a horse hair or a golden thread lined with many tiny tiglés, is just the appearance of an empty form. It has never existed as anything whatsoever, and certainly does not go beyond basic space. The lamp of empty tiglés and the lamp of totally pure basic space (*ying nam-dak-gi drön-ma*), in both its outer and inner aspects, are distinct expressions arising naturally in perfect clarity. If you make them your path in an authentic way, you need not rely on any means that would make your path a process of removing or transforming the limitless dualism of sense objects and their subjective perceiver—that is, all perceptions based on confusion that arise adventitiously in light of your lack of realization. Rather, these perceptions are purified in such a way that they fade and cease quite naturally. It is then impossible for you to stray from perfect mastery within the inconceivable essence of primordial being—the supreme and naturally abiding kayas and timeless awareness. This is due to the infallible truth of the nature of phenomena.

Recognizing the outer and inner unity of basic space and awareness, focus your fundamental inner awareness, lucid, pure, and vital, on the nondual experience of one taste within the originally pure basic space of supreme emptiness. Focus the radiance of awareness that is outwardly evident—the dorjé lu-gu-gyü itself—within the confines of the field of basic space and the tiglés, so that it does not shift or move. Take this as the very core of your spiritual practice and pursue it one-pointedly to gain familiarity. Without indulging in the contrived sullying tendencies of ordinary consciousness to speculate about or attribute characteristics to this outer and inner

unity of basic space and awareness, pursue an authentic practice of simply resting in an utterly relaxed state. Due to this resting, these outer and inner aspects of the unity of basic space and awareness are mutually supportive. As you bring clarity and stability to consummation, have no doubt that you will swiftly gain total freedom on the supreme level of primordial resolution as the ultimate state of the kayas and timeless awareness becomes fully evident.

These points are discussed in *The Reverberation of Sound Source Tantra*:

> The key points for direct perception are those of body, speech, and mind.
> Ensure harmony between these individual key points.
> In this regard, the body should never be separate from the three kayas.[20]
> The speech should be made stable
> through training, resting, and coming to a decisive experience.
> The mind should gain stability within basic space.
> . . . .
> Never be separate from the pith instructions of three key points.
> That is, rely on the key points of the avenue,
> the objective field, and subtle energy and awareness.
> The avenue is that of gazing with the eyes of the three kayas.
> The objective field is free of any obscuring factors.
> The gentleness of subtle energy and awareness ensures the unfolding
> of timeless awareness.

The benefits and advantages are stated in *The Tantra of the Single Child of the Buddhas, Bringing Liberation When Worn as an Amulet:*

> The posture is like a lion's, a rishi's, or an elephant's.
> If you do not waver from this,
> your lot is equal to that of three thousand buddhas.
> . . . .
> As for speech, be like a mute

and do not make the slightest sign to anyone.
Anyone who acts in this way will experience
the natural cutting through of thoughts coming and going in the ordinary mind.

. . . .

Do not be separate from the lu-gu-gyü within basic space,
but rest in equipoise with it.
The fortune of anyone who acts in this way
is equal to that of the original Kuntuzangpo.

In particular, the context is that of inner basic space, originally pure and free of elaboration—supreme emptiness, the infinite expanse that is the state of primordial freedom. In that context, understand what is for what it is—naturally occurring awareness, the utterly lucid and unique sphere of being, timelessly of one taste with and inseparable from that basic space. With such understanding, you will never stray from a state of utter relaxation, pristine, lucid, and unwavering. The dynamic energy of awareness will arise and unfold as a matter of course, welling forth without conscious endeavor on your part, as a special state of effortless sublime knowing.

If you have such experiences, do not become proud, for to do so is to fall under the sway of the maras, who will cause you to become a fake, someone who tries to undermine other teachings and individuals and who brags about seeing gods or demons or about having supernormal perception. Do not succumb to these maras, but instead make sure that your faith, devotion, and pure view toward the sacred teachings and holy individuals become more and more excellent. Cut through the speculative doubts you may have concerning your own path and find a deep-rooted certainty based on unwavering conviction, so that you can apply yourself one-pointedly, making your life and your practice one and the same. As for others who lack this realization, or whose realization is incorrect or incomplete, have great compassion for them and do whatever you can to benefit them. As these directives illustrate, you must strive solely, by any means, to follow in the wake of the flawless examples set by rigdzins of the past.

The dorjé lu-gu-gyü is awareness whose life force is the very essence of timeless awareness. Formless, it manifests as though with form, in the center of the field of basic space and the tiglés, as the radiance of awareness, unsullied by any distortion, becoming evident outwardly. To allow that pristine, clear lu-gu-gyü to stabilize without wavering, and without your corrupting it with adventitious concepts and speculation, focus yourself entirely upon it. Striving continuously at this alone definitely embraces the entire essence of spiritual practice found in this pinnacle approach of the heart essence.

Although deprived of such key points, some proclaim themselves to be Great Perfection practitioners of the heart drop teachings. Some spend many years in a fool's meditation, yet still think very highly of themselves. Some boast about nit-picking points, babbling on with the foolish talk of pedants. Such people pass their lives thus and arrogantly assume that there is something worthy in this posturing, although they are capable only of leading many deluded beings not to a spiritual path, but over an abyss. It is plainly evident that there are far too many people like that, and I absolutely cannot stand it. Still, it is possible that there are a few fortunate people who have not fallen under the sway of the maras of jealousy and sectarian bigotry, but whose personal karmic tendencies are quite noble and genuine and are connected with the power of the victorious ones. It is the welfare of such people that concerns me; so I explain the teachings again and again, presenting them very clearly. Therefore, I ask that, come what may, you please become capable of holding these consummate and profound meanings of the very essence, keeping them in the center of your heart.

[This is what my lama said.]

In addition, *The Reverberation of Sound* states:

The nature of the lu-gu-gyü
is such that all concepts are purified,
so that there is unconfused buddhahood.

. . . .

For a fortunate one who discovers direct perception,
the names of the three realms of samsara do not exist.
Such a person's experience of the three planes of existence has been refined
with great precision.

Such passages make it very clear what the radiance of awareness is and what the benefits and advantages of perceiving it are.

Thus, if you realize and become familiar with the outer and inner unity of basic space and awareness in an authentic way, the four visions will arise in progression in and of themselves. With this as a basis, it is said that there are nevertheless different degrees of acumen among practitioners and that the visions may or may not evolve smoothly, due to the degree—highest, average, or inferior—to which someone has realized and become familiar with trekchö. Certainly, someone with the greatest diligence can traverse the path swiftly, while lazy people will take longer. Let me explain how the visions arise in their proper order.

The First Vision

The first vision is the "direct perception of the nature of phenomena" (*chö-nyi ngön-sum*). Once inner awareness, which is beyond ordinary consciousness, has been perceived directly and is easily maintained, and the vision of the unity of basic space and awareness becoming outwardly evident is unobstructed, then, as *The Reverberation of Sound* states:

The vision of the direct perception of the nature of phenomena
definitely emerges through the avenue of the sense faculty.
It is clearly evident in the cloudless sky.

This means that the indestructible radiance of awareness in the center of your heart passes along the secret pathway of the subtle channels of light. Emerging through the avenue of the far-reaching lasso of the water lamp, it is perceived as a

vague luminous appearance that is similar in color to the ground on which it arises—this appearance is "outer basic space" (*chi-ying*). As this evolves, the luminous appearance becomes more lustrous and you perceive many tiny tiglés—this is "inner basic space" (*nang-ying*). These constitute the lamp of totally pure basic space, which is the essence of the sambhogakaya pure realm.

You perceive tiglés—composed of concentric spheres that are red, orange, yellow, light yellow, dark blue, and so forth—about an inch or two in diameter, sometimes clear, sometimes not, one or two at a time. These constitute the lamp of empty tiglés, which is the essence of the immeasurable mansion.

You perceive a luminous form like a horsehair, a crystal mala, or a golden thread, with tiny tiglés at intervals, giving off other tiny tiglés. Many of these come and go, moving swiftly within the field of basic space and the tiglés and throughout the surrounding space. This all constitutes the dorjé lu-gu-gyü, which is the essence of the enlightened embodiments.

If these arise, clear, pure, and distinct, in the direct perception of your subtle sense faculty, wherever they extend the appearances of ordinary sense objects are blocked. The luminous vision appears wherever you lead it. When you perceive the lamp of empty tiglés to consist of three contiguous spheres and the dorjé lu-gu-gyü abides within these to a slight degree, this marks the onset of the visions of this path. It is called the "vision of the direct perception of the nature of phenomena," because you are directly perceiving the inherent manifestation of that nature in all its nakedness, beyond any metaphor, symbol, sign, description, or speculation about it. *The Reverberation of Sound* states:

> With the vision of the direct perception of the nature of phenomena,
> one is taken beyond speculation or reifying words.

If practitioners of this path were to die at this point, even if they have committed very harmful actions, without taking into account any other factor on the path they would not fall into lower states of rebirth, even if one tried to push them

there. Rather, they would take rebirth in a fine body in some higher state and would be able to continue their progress on the path.

The Second Vision

The second vision is the "enrichment of meditative experience" (*nyam gong-pel*). As the luminous vision continues to evolve, it moves out about four finger widths from your midbrow. Five-colored rays and tiglés of rainbow light appear as vertical stripes, spokes, or a lattice, forming shapes of light like pavilions, lotuses, fortresses, or stupas, with many checkerboard patterns—an expanse of varicolored masses of light, within which the lamp of empty tiglés (the five-colored clusters and so forth) continues to abide. These tiglés increase to the size of hand mirrors, bowls, or even shields, and become more opaque. In the center of these, the dorjé lu-gu-gyü that is awareness also becomes more stable and thicker, as its dynamic expression is perfected, until the form of a deity arises, from the cranial protuberance down to half a form, to a complete form, to many forms. As these natural manifestations of timeless awareness abide without shifting or moving, they continue to evolve while your ordinary perceptions based on confusion gradually subside. The force of the subtle energies is exhausted—the subtle energy of karma that on outer and inner levels is responsible for the origin and dissolution of coarse sense objects, the subtle energy that on the inner level causes the mind-body aggregates to stir and move, and the subtle energy that on the secret level causes all-consuming thoughts to stir in response to their objects. With this, on the outer level all conditioned appearances arise as supports on the yogin's path; on the inner level, there is no effort to fixate on confused thoughts and actions deriving from afflictive emotions; and on the secret level, you abide as a matter of course within the basic space of awareness, unchanging and free of concepts.

If you die at this point, you will awaken to buddhahood in the bardo of the nature of phenomena, so that thereafter your self-perpetuating perceptions based on confusion will not occur. *The Reverberation of Sound* states:

The vision of the enrichment of meditative experience
causes perceptions based on confusion to subside.

The Third Vision

The third vision is the "full expression of awareness" (*rig-pa tsé-pep*). All your present impure, ordinary perceptions of seemingly real things—earth, rock, mountains, cliffs, and so forth—all that arises in your experience as solid matter subsides, and the supreme vision of the pure realm of spontaneously present utter lucidity pervades everywhere. The nature of whatever manifests to your perceptions is, without fail, that of light. There are elegant arrays of many clusters of tiglés of five colors, and within each are the forms of peaceful and wrathful deities, masculine and feminine embracing in union, accompanied by retinues, arising so as to fill all of space. From the heart centers of these deities come very fine filaments of light, which connect with your own heart center. At that point, sense objects manifesting on the outer level arise as the pure realms of the sambhogakaya. On the inner level, your body does not manifest, in its true essence, as something corporeal, but arises as an empty form. On the secret level, the stirring of impure subtle energy and ordinary mind ceases in its own place, while pure subtle energy and mind reach full expression. You gain mastery over countless enlightened qualities, such as special kinds of sublime vision and states of supernormal perception.

If you die at this point, your mind and body will be taken into those filaments of light and drawn into the heart centers of the forms of light that are expressions of timeless awareness. Alternatively, the forms of light may be drawn into your heart center. In any case, a transference will take place, so that you will merge with the ground aspect of utter lucidity in the bardo. At that point, you will be purified, so that you will never again be reborn in a coarse body, subject to decay, nor will you be subject to any of the habitual patterns attendant on that. Your mind and body disperse into the light mass of precious timeless awareness. Your awareness is completely freed from all flaws that obscure it. This is the awakening to buddhahood

within the expanse of inner basic space, supreme and originally pure. As one tantra states:

> The vision of the full expression of awareness
> frees one from outer and inner dualistic perceptions and corporeality.

The Fourth Vision

The fourth vision is that of "phenomena resolving in their true nature" (*chö-nyi zé-pa*). Impure sensory appearances on the outer level, your own body on the inner level, and thought patterns based on afflictive emotions on the secret level (as well as the subtle energies that cause them to stir) are purified in their own place in the immediacy of awareness, so that you are brought to the point of resolution, at which there is no possibility of their occurring again. *The Reverberation of Sound* states:

> The vision of phenomena resolving in their true nature
> cuts through the perpetuation of the three realms of samsara.

These supreme visions on the path of spontaneous presence, which are the outward evidence of what is timelessly without distortion, are subsumed like waves subsiding on water. When they are on the point of entering, as a matter of course, into the "youthful vase body" (*zhön-nu bum-ku*)—the originally pure and profoundly lucid ground of freedom—it is in the nature of the experience that you gain mastery over any state of rebirth you choose. If you wish to make the supreme transference and arise in a vajrakaya, which is not subject to decay, once your body has dispersed into a mass of light, your fingers appear vividly to your awareness as fingers of five-colored light. No other part of your body whatsoever is evident. At this juncture, as soon as you direct your awareness to these fingers of light, instantly a vajrakaya, an embodiment of timeless awareness that is not subject to decay, becomes fully evident to you. This is the supreme transference to the subtle and indestructible rainbow body.

In any event, without any trace of them remaining, the visions of the path merge with the very nature of your mind—the consummate and primordial place of freedom, the enormously spacious expanse of original purity, completely beyond all the elaborations of ordinary characteristics. The visions merge within the essence of timeless awareness, inwardly lucid and extremely subtle, inwardly directed but not deluded, and free of restriction or bias. As they blend in one taste with and are inseparable from this, you maintain in this very lifetime an ongoing state of consummate, authentic being. This, moreover, is stated in *The Reverberation of Sound*:

> The vision of phenomena resolving in their true nature
> is one in which all visionary experiences cease.
> The body resolves; even the objects of the senses resolve.
> Thought patterns based on confusion are naturally freed,
> and one is free of words as the basis for expressing anything.
> . . . .
> Thus, with the continuity of the body's elements having been interrupted,
> the physical mass that is subject to decay vanishes
> as one awakens to buddhahood in this very lifetime.

The last three lines of this passage clearly demonstrate how Vima and others who abide in a vajrakaya by means of supreme transference have become truly perfect buddhas.

There is a group of three pith instructions for stabilizing each of the visions on this path, and among these is included the measure of success determined by your dreams. Let me briefly explain them, as well as the actual signs of successful practice that affect your body, speech, and mind.

The foundation is laid with the three ways of not wavering (*mi-gul-wa sum*). With your body in any of the postures and your eyes gazing by means of any of the techniques, your subtle energy and ordinary mind are directed to the unity of basic space and awareness. This pith instruction ensures that, if you do not waver from this

unity of basic space and awareness to anything else, your experience of it will grow and stabilize. This is crucial during the direct perception of the nature of phenomena.

The pith instructions for the measure of the three ways of remaining steady (*dö-pa sum*) are as follows. On the outer level, when sensory appearances remain steady in their natural state, they do not rob you of your attention, and these conditioned appearances arise as supports on the path. On the inner level, when the mind-body aggregates remain steady, confused activities are not reinforced. On the secret level, when subtle energy and mind remain steady, ordinary mind ceases to function. These instructions pertain to the enrichment of meditative experience.

At this and other times, the measure of your success can be determined by your dreams (*tsé mi-lam-gyi zung-wa*). At first, your dreams become entirely positive. After that, you become capable of recognizing them, creating emanations within them, and manipulating them. Finally, they are purified within utter lucidity and cease.

Signs of success arise through your body, speech, and mind (*tak go-sum la shar-wa*). During the direct perception of the nature of phenomena, your body does not waver or shift, your speech is not used for verbal expression, and your mind experiences the immediate purification of thought patterns based on confusion. During the enrichment of meditative experience, you have no vanity concerning your body, your speech is random, and your mind abides in a nonconceptual state. During the full expression of awareness, your body is not affected by the four elements, your speech employs the melody of the teachings as a matter of course, and your mind is free of anxiety or misgivings. During the resolution of phenomena in their true nature, your body is like a rainbow or mist, your speech echoes the sounds around you, and your mind experiences only thoughts that flash like lightning.

The keystones of the three kinds of attainment (*top-pa sum*) are as follows. On the outer level, you attain mastery over apparent sense objects, which manifest naturally as a pure realm. On the inner level, your body arises naturally as a luminous vision. On the secret level, subtle energy, ordinary mind, and afflictive emotions have vanished, so that you gain mastery in timeless awareness. These instructions pertain to the full expression of awareness.

The measure of freedom through the four kinds of indwelling confidence (*deng-zhi*) is as follows. This is the inevitable exhaustion of denial and affirmation, of hope and fear—freedom from the hope of wishing to attain buddhahood elsewhere, freedom from the fear that what is naturally present will not become fully evident, freedom that comes from samsara having no basis, and freedom in that you yourself will not return to samsara again. These occur during all four visions of the path.

You should understand that you do not rely on other circumstances on the path, such as dream recognition. If you become familiar with tögal, these all occur as a matter of course.

These pith instructions for tögal are the province of extremely diligent individuals who have no doubts. If you strive to follow them one-pointedly, it is irrelevant whether your intelligence is sharp or dull, or whether your karma is positive or negative. Thus, this is the sacred and sublime secret path to be followed assiduously by people who really understand these points.

Pith Instructions

The third point is a concise summary of dispelling hindrances and enriching your practice. There are means of removing flaws in your eyesight and making it clearer and more stable, and there are special mantras, substances, and other factors that cause the lamps to develop. You should learn about these in other works, such as the historical and hidden treasure sources of the heart drop teachings. As a single means sufficient to dispel hindrances and enrich your practice, emphasize devotion for your lama. The fundamental factor in bringing the path to consummation without hindrance is what we refer to as "secret conduct" (*sang-chö*), and so you should strive to emphasize any one of the seven levels of uncontrived conduct that channel subtle energy.

The first level is that of a bee seeking nectar. Although in general it is necessary to identify what is to be abandoned on the path and what antidotes to rely on, in this context the primary thing to be abandoned is the "universal ground," which is the karmically neutral, preconscious aspect that is present in the mindstreams of all

beings without bias, before either confusion or freedom arises. If one has realization, there are the kayas and array of pure realms of buddhahood; if not, one is lost in the various kinds of embodiment to which beings in the six states are subject. These two alternatives are not mutually exclusive. Whenever causes and conditions come together, however, illusion-like sensory appearances, manifest yet ineffable, occur in your direct perception. They are equal, in that a crucial distinction has not yet been made and the open avenue to freedom is blocked. Yet even as sensory appearances manifest, in fact they have never existed as anything whatsoever, and so are equally free of elaboration. In such a situation, what is termed the "subtle energy of life force" (*sok-lung*) arouses this manifest aspect so that it shifts outward and becomes evident like light shining.

On this basis, four conditions initially give rise to a mode of confusion. The causal condition is the failure to recognize that appearances are naturally manifest. The controlling condition is the reification of these as something "other." The condition that provides a framework is the proliferation of many perceptions based on confusion to which this reification leads. And the subsequent condition is the simultaneity of conscious awareness and what is known by it. Due to these conditions, there is straying from the embodiment of timeless awareness into a body that is subject to decay, straying from the manifestations of basic space into sense objects, and straying from awareness into ordinary mind.

From the point at which that confusion first set in to the present, in which we founder in that confusion, we have never been distanced from the kayas and timeless awareness. To give an example, water becomes what we call "ice" due to the adventitious condition of a cold wind, but even after it has clearly become hard and solid, like rock, it has never lost its nature as water. Therefore, it is completely unacceptable to take this seemingly great difference between positive and negative states as a reason for doubting the total purity that is the nature of being. If you understand this mode of confusion just as it is, as adventitious, it will be impossible for you not to be certain that the Truth of the Path is awareness and the consummate view is direct introduction to its natural manifestations.

If you do attain freedom, that freedom depends on four conditions. The causal condition is supreme emptiness as original purity—the very nature of mind that is the timeless immediacy of primordial being, the consummate way in which all phenomena abide. The controlling condition is uncontrived, naturally occurring awareness in all its nakedness. The condition that provides a framework is the recognition of the natural, supreme inseparability of basic space and awareness. And the subsequent condition, which provides continuity, is the recognition of that flawless unity of basic space and awareness, so that the dynamic energy of the recognition is perfected and stability is attained. Once this stability is attained, it is impossible for you to stray from the essence endowed with twofold purity—the essence of all buddhas without exception, throughout all directions and times—which becomes instantly and fully evident.

Until this happens, no matter how fancy a label you apply to this aspect of your confusion, there will be no chance, no opportunity, to attain natural freedom if you have no antidote. Regardless of how extensively or how little they study, if those who follow the heart drop teachings do not understand the foregoing, it would seem that they are truly deluded, no matter how much they talk about there being "no virtue, no harm, no view, no meditation, no division between day and night," and so on.

[This is what my lama said.]

The second level is that of a swallow returning to its nest. Once you have gained certainty, by cutting through any speculative doubts about the key points of the heart drop teachings that concern the very essence of being, you must begin to implement these teachings in your practice. It will be difficult for people with doubts to follow the path effectively. However, if your practice is imbued with sincere devotion for your lama, any doubts will be cut through in the immediacy of your own experience. So do not act like a corpse laid out to rest, but subdue your afflictive emotions by contemplating the significance of what you perceive directly as the unity of basic space and awareness. If you meditate so that when you contemplate each key point in full, the ordinary conditioned state disintegrates, and if you allow the dynamic energy of that process to perfect itself, these self-perpetuating afflictive emotions will be entirely uprooted without fail.

On the third level, you behave like a wild deer. As a support to your practice, you should spend the rest of your life alone, in solitude, like a deer that has been wounded.

On the fourth level, you behave like a mute. Since there is nothing worse than gossiping in retreat, train yourself not to say anything. At times, you may even sit mute during group ceremonies.

On the fifth level, once you have acted in the foregoing ways, there will come a point at which you will speak out impulsively, saying unpredictable and unconnected things without any hope or fear. This is called "speaking like a lunatic" and is not something to be deliberately avoided.

On the sixth level, experiencing contentment with whatever happens—like a dog or a pig, with no acceptance or rejection of what is positive or negative regarding food, clothing, dwelling, or bed—is called "conduct of the equal taste of what is positive or negative."

Once you have perfected these six levels in order, or even just one of them, and have gained stable mastery in self-knowing timeless awareness, you will as a matter of course use your perceptions of sensory appearances to "apply the seal." This means that your awareness will not be threatened by circumstantial appearances assaulting it, for awareness is content solely to abide in its natural state. What need would there be, then, for methods such as those found in the category of Mind, in which awareness is, so to speak, tacked on in the immediacy of your perceptions?

For as long as you maintain natural awareness, you will be free of all fixated attachment, for you will not hope for positive outer circumstances. There will be no opportunity for anger or aversion, since negative circumstances will not threaten you. When, for you, all manifestation of objects and the subject perceiving them never stray from being nothing but the ever-shifting display of awareness, that is the seventh level, called "conduct like that of a lion" or "conduct that exerts mastery over the world of appearances and possibilities."

You should engage in these levels in a totally pure way by implementing them precisely according to your degree of meditative experience, without hypocrisy and in a timely manner.

The Auxiliary Practices

The enrichment of practice comes from practice itself. Taking this as a basis, let me explain, in the context of these instructions on the main practice, the pith instructions that provide continuity to your spiritual practice—the four occasions on which you are united in equalness with the buddhas.

The first instruction concerns gazing at your natural face—the unity of basic space and awareness—by day. You should engage in authentic practice, as has been explained previously, whether it is practice involving the originally pure unity of awareness and emptiness or the luminous visions of spontaneous presence that are the natural radiance of that unity. It is excellent if you can spend your waking hours meditating so as to bring to maturity the key points of tögal as they are set forth in the source text. At twilight, or even at midnight—whenever the moon is clearly visible—or (if it is not) by relying on a candle flame, it is ideal if you focus your subtle energy and mind on the dorjé lu-gu-gyü that is awareness, confining it within the parameters of the illusory vajra fortress.

The second instruction concerns focusing your senses on the key point at twilight. If you are a passionate person, once you have harnessed the energies of your body as the source of skillful means, you can rely in an authentic way on a consort. While experiencing the unity of bliss and emptiness that results, you can focus your subtle energy and mind on the objects you perceive with your senses, as the key point. When the source text of this cycle says, "Rely on the nectar of sense objects," it is clearly making a general statement, so such practice would be appropriate. But it would suffice to practice the "blazing and melting" exercise discussed during the preliminary practices, which is a means of harnessing the energies of your body as the source of skillful means.

The third instruction concerns "placing objects of knowledge within the vase" at midnight. When you are going to sleep, clearly and precisely visualize in your heart center and at your midbrow a white tiglé, about the size of a pea, with a white *A* in the center of each, as fine as though drawn with a single hair. These in essence

constitute the inseparability of your lama and your own self-knowing awareness. Pray one-pointedly to your lama, requesting that you will be able to recognize utter lucidity, then focus your attention on the small tiglés. Once these are clear in your mind, visualize light shining from them, filling the world of appearances and possibilities with five-colored light. Finally, this light is drawn back into the tiglés, and you go to sleep without your mind being distracted by anything else. If you are uncomfortable meditating on both tiglés at once, meditate on them alternately or emphasize the one in your heart center. The tiglés are not flat disks with an *A* in the center, but spherical with a three-dimensional *A* in the center, clear and unobscured. This method will bring you to the recognition of utter lucidity and the dream state.

The fourth instruction concerns clarifying awareness at dawn. At first light, adopt the lion posture and clear your breath with full exhalations, shaking your upper body. A yard or two, or even just a cubit, in the space in front of you, clearly visualize a transparent white *A*—in essence the inseparability of your root lama and Vimalamitra—radiating five-colored light. Focus your gaze on it. Envision your entire mind and body blending completely with the unborn mind of the lama, and focus intently, concentrating your subtle energy and mind one-pointedly. When your awareness is free of any sullying influence and becomes pristine and lucid, you come to the decision that the lama is nowhere other than the unborn nature of your own mind. If you maintain awareness in a blissful state of utter relaxation, all-consuming thoughts will all arise as the display of that awareness and become naturally free.

A key point that is crucial at all times and under all circumstances is to carry out any spiritual practice—and, in fact, all other physical, verbal, and mental activities—within the context of lucid, pure awareness. If you do so, all sensory appearances you perceive and all your ordinary mental states will manifest as adornments of awareness (like the planets and stars reflected in a vast lake) and will be perfect in being of one taste with awareness (like water melting into water).

Those of Average Acumen

Second, the advice that frees those of average acumen in the bardo has two subheadings—the pith instructions concerning the bardo of dying (compared to a child climbing into its mother's lap) and the pith instructions concerning the bardo of the nature of phenomena (compared to an unwavering golden probe).

The Bardo of Dying

This first subheading has two topics—blending basic space and awareness, and advice for the transference of consciousness.

Blending Basic Space and Awareness

To blend basic space and awareness means to apply, as a key point of your spiritual practice, the blending of threefold space in this present lifetime. Outer basic space is exemplified by the empty expanse of space surrounding you, which cannot be objectified by your imagination and is without obscuration or impediment. It is also identified as the sky ("the space of adornment") free of clouds. In either case, what it actually exemplifies is the true nature of phenomena, the supreme expanse of original purity—basic space free of transition or change, which is the innermost aspect of everything, while not being itself divisible into outer and inner. This of necessity is pervasive at present even in the outer world, but it does not abide in any fixed way, with any restriction or in any extreme. Similarly, inner basic space constitutes the cavities within the body, the blood vessels, and so forth. And secret basic space is simply mind itself—supreme emptiness endowed with the heart of awareness.

These are timelessly of one taste, and you should strive one-pointedly to blend basic space and awareness, or to meditate on threefold space, on the basis of your understanding of a key point of the path—that what appears, to our minds as ordinary beings, to be fragmented can in fact be blended inseparably as one taste through the special magical means that are the pith instructions of the most majestic and sublime secret. From time to time, think to yourself: "I have died. This skylike basic space of supreme emptiness is the utter lucidity of dharmakaya experienced at the moment of

death. My recognition of mind itself—the unity of awareness and emptiness—manifests like a small stream or a son, while the utter lucidity of genuine supreme emptiness, which abides as the ground of being, manifests like the ocean or a mother. Although it may seem to my ordinary consciousness that there is a duality, in fact once I have attained the natural state it will be clear that this has never been the case—there is not even the mere distinction of male and female as it applies to mother and son. Rather, I will realize the one taste of their inseparability, like the pouring of water into water." Arouse this deep conviction in your mind.

Familiarizing yourself with this will make dying very easy. Then, at the moment of your death, you should blend basic space and awareness forcefully in accord with your prior familiarization.

Transference of Consciousness

The way to train in the transference of consciousness at present is as follows. Adopting the posture of meditation, complete the preliminary practices, or at least the taking of refuge and the arousal of motivation. After this, envision that all of space is completely pervaded by the five sublime natural nirmanakaya pure realms, together with the great charnel ground of Erupting Volcano. Meditate that your body has a hollow, luminous appearance, and in the center of it is the central channel—the causal path to supreme enlightenment—about as thick as a bamboo arrow shaft, rising from your secret center to the crown of your head in a perfectly straight line, like a tube of blue crystal. Meditate one-pointedly that inside this channel, at the level of your heart center, is a tiglé with a luster of the five colors, marked in its center with a white A. This is the essence into which all your subtle energy and ordinary mind are gathered, without any residue.

On the crown of your head, in a sphere of rainbow light above the central channel, is your glorious and exceedingly kind root lama, in a mood of great delight, actually present in a form of light—the supreme guide who will lead you on the path through the bardo. Strongly arousing a yearning devotion, pray with a piercing intensity, thinking, "I pray that I may be led instantly into the expanse of supremely

blissful utter lucidity—the lama's enlightened mind." As soon as you then focus your attention on the tiglé of subtle energy and mind, which is what is to be transferred, meditate that it rises higher and higher. When it reaches the uppermost end of the central channel, say both "Heek!" and "P'hat!" (or simply either one of these) and meditate on the tiglé dissolving into the lama's heart center, blending with it in one taste. Meditate on this over and over.

When you conclude a practice session, envision the lama passing down the central channel and dissolving into your heart center, so that you awaken to buddhahood in the essence of the lama. Let your mind settle gently and rest in a state of utter relaxation. Let the visualizations of the pure realms fall away and dedicate the virtue. Recite prayers of aspiration such as the one that begins, "In all lifetimes, may I never be separate . . . "

When death is certain, there is a specific change in the practice. You train in the transference of consciousness as before, but at the close of the session you meditate that your root lama departs for the charnel ground of Erupting Volcano or whatever natural nirmanakaya pure realm you wish to reach. This is so that your fixations on the appearances of this life will not draw you back. If you can meditate one-pointedly in this way until your breath stops, or at least for as long as you are able to, you will be reborn in a pure realm, unsullied by the effects of harmful actions. You should also know that even if you have gained the measure of success that brings freedom in the bardo, by performing the transference of consciousness you will ensure that you will not regress.

The Bardo of the Nature of Phenomena

In this second phase, when the more obvious stages of dissolution are complete at the time of death, you may or may not have the opportunity to recognize the three subtle visions of "appearance," "increase," and "attainment." In any case, once the adventitious stirring of subtle energy and mind has ceased naturally at the end of this process, the utter lucidity of the ground of being—the genuine essence of mind itself, like a cloudless sky in autumn—definitely becomes evident at the moment of death.

Those who do not understand the key points of this spiritual path black out, becoming unconscious for a short time. Then, once again the dynamic energy of utter lucidity—the very nature of mind—causes the natural manifestations of subtle energy and mind to arise, but such people have no chance of recognizing them and that natural state is only latently present, for the perceptions based on confusion begin to arise, signaling the phase of the bardo during which these people move toward rebirth, and they cannot move beyond them. At this point, for those who have not received pith instructions on incorporating the experiences of this lifetime into their spiritual path, what else can happen but the formation of the mental body of the bardo?

Those who are familiar with the key points of the vajrayana path do not fall into unconsciousness, as just explained, with other states of mind blocked. If they realize utter emptiness as a foreshadowing of utter lucidity, then, in the aftermath of that realization, they certainly will attain a pure illusory form, not the ordinary mental body of the bardo. But the specific element found in the heart drop teachings of the Great Perfection approach is not the same as the form of a deity that is a vision on the path arising in the bardo of the nature of phenomena. As *The Six Expanses* states:

> Between the bardo of the pure nature of phenomena
> and the illusory form of a chosen deity
> there is a similarity, a resemblance, but do not mistake one for the other.

Accordingly, the difference is very great, depending on whether or not the more obvious and subtle visions that are the dynamic energy of utter lucidity are sullied by the subliminal distorting effects of subtle energy and mind.

Those whose practice of the development and completion stages is even better directly realize utter emptiness—utter lucidity in the ultimate sense—but in the wake of that they certainly do not transcend the experience of the uncontrived deity's form becoming fully evident as the state of primordial unity on the path of learning. They are still on that path on which learning is required. You should understand that the

vajrakaya of the supreme transference discussed earlier is quite different from manifestations of the rupakaya endowed with twofold purity, for no more path remains to be followed.

In this context, "consciousness dissolving into space" refers to the cessation of the three phases of appearance, increase, and attainment. At that point, mind itself—genuine utter lucidity, naturally abiding as supreme, primordial emptiness—arises as a matter of course. And the specific period during which its radiance does not emerge from that state is termed the "utter lucidity of dharmakaya experienced at the moment of death." Given that the ground of being as basic space—the supreme state of freedom that is originally pure—is metaphorically compared to a mother, stable spiritual practice focusing on the originally pure nature of mind in this lifetime is likened to a child. Whenever these two come together, you recognize what has already become familiar and do not move from it. This is called the "reunion of the mother and child aspects of utter lucidity." To hold a firm stance without turning back from it brings what is referred to as "freedom in an unobstructed ascent without experiencing the bardo." You are completely free in a state in which there is no trace of anything to be abandoned and in which no such thing can arise again, so that dharmakaya is fully evident in the context of the consummate fruition state.

If you do not thus maintain the ongoing, authentic state that is dharmakaya, the utter lucidity of spontaneous presence definitely arises as the essence of sambhogakaya, which is a vision on the path that becomes outwardly evident, aroused by the subtle energy that serves as the life force of sublime knowing. But since this arises within the context of original purity, it has not strayed from its natural state, as though having gone somewhere else. How does it arise? With the phase called "utter lucidity dissolving into the state of primordial unity," the various visions of tiglés of light mature into enlightened forms—the buddhas of the five families and the countless groupings of peaceful and wrathful deities, masculine and feminine. These are even more vibrant than those that arise during the full expression of awareness, and they are accompanied by sounds, auras, and rays of light. They arise naturally, and the interval during which they are present is specific to the state of primordial unity, which is a particular aspect of utter lucidity in the bardo.

If you do not gain freedom at this point, there occur the "visions of fourfold timeless awareness"—the arising of four fields of light, each adorned with a huge tiglé. If you do not gain freedom at that point, there are what we refer to as the "visions of the eight avenues for the arising of spontaneous presence." These are spontaneous presence arising as responsiveness, as timeless awareness, as light, as enlightened forms, as nonduality, as freedom from extremes, as the impure avenue of samsara, and as the pure avenue of timeless awareness. These eight arise at the same time. If you do not gain freedom even at that point, you pass out of the bardo of the nature of phenomena and wander in the phase of the bardo in which you move toward rebirth.

Thus, regardless of which natural manifestations arise during the bardo of the nature of phenomena—from those of primordial unity to those of spontaneous presence—there are key points on the path to bring about freedom in each of those situations. That is, whatever visions arise are recognized to be natural manifestations of original purity, and you abide, utterly relaxed, without moving from that recognition. Once you reach a decision without any hesitation, you perfect the dynamic energy of that recognition unswayed by dualistic perceptions and so acquire stability. With this, the luminous visions and the sublime knowing that experiences them become of one taste within inner basic space, the supremely spacious expanse of original purity. Without ever straying from the context of this consummate place of freedom, you hold to the empire endowed with twofold purity, which is called "awakening to buddhahood through the sambhogakaya in the bardo."

If I were to explain in detail the special ways in which these experiences arise, the measure of freedom gained, the so-called days determined by one's meditative stability, the classification of different instants in time, and so forth, it would be too much. It is difficult to understand these even partially, so you should study these topics in the great secret Treasuries that were composed by the omniscient Longchen Rabjam.

[Such were my lama's words.]

Those of Inferior Acumen

Third, the advice that frees those of inferior acumen into natural nirmanakaya pure realms is as follows. You fail to attain the supreme states of freedom just discussed. Instead, you will find that the mental body of the bardo arises like a dream as you move toward rebirth. At that point there are the sounds of avalanches, of great bodies of water and rivers overflowing, and of great winds blowing violently; these sounds are unbearable, like a thousand dragons roaring at once. You see many places, towns, houses, companions, living and dead, and much that you may recognize or not. You have many unpredictable experiences, both pleasant and painful, of your body in various postures or activities—of eating, drinking, getting dressed, and so forth. You are tormented by many perceptions based on confusion—of huge conflagrations, great floods, terrifying abysses of earth and rock. Like a feather carried on the wind, you do not even have the freedom to go where you wish. Although you are without refuge or a guide, your mind and body, which are nourished by smells, are endowed with some temporary states of supernormal perception and miraculous powers, you can recall most of the thoughts and activities of your former life, and a great desire to seek out a body arises in you constantly.

At such a point, recognize the visions of the bardo. You definitely need your root lama, who is the consummate refuge, and the essence of his or her advice, which is easy to implement and very effective. So at that point, bring to mind escorts, hero-like figures, and a sublime and naturally manifest pure realm. Recall your fervent intention to go to that realm, so that you cannot wait even for a moment. It is very important under any circumstances to know how to bring your mind and body to the spiritual path, and as for the realm to which you are going, in the center is Dense Array, in which Vairochana, the mind vajra, abides. The ruler Akshobhya, the form vajra, abides in Manifest Joy to the east; Ratnasambhava, the vajra of enlightened qualities, in Manifold Glory to the south; Amitabha, the speech vajra, in Lotus Array to the west; and Amoghasiddhi, the vajra of enlightened activity, in Accomplishment of Highest Activity to the north. In these realms, the masculine and feminine buddhas cause a rain of teachings of the vajrayana and other approaches to fall on their assembled retinues, and there is amazing joy as well as happiness. Countless such

realms, which are like the sublime nirmanakaya pure realm, the Realm of Bliss, have special qualities that cannot really be described, yet they are actually present in your direct perception.

The means of going to a realm depend on the fact that the greater interest and faith you feel for any buddha family are indications of a positive karmic connection. Alternatively, if you are certain that all the forms and realms of the victorious ones are inseparable in the one taste underlying their diversity, it makes no difference which realm you choose. Strongly arouse yearning devotion, thinking, "Now I will go to that naturally manifest pure realm like a loosed arrow. I pray that my precious root lama, the essence of the victorious ones of the five families, will draw me there with the hook of innate compassion, which does not discriminate between near and far, and is unobscured and unobstructed." With this, once you reach the pure realm, as though waking from a dream, you take miraculous rebirth as an embodiment of timeless awareness with the major and minor marks of perfection. You meet the teacher and retinue, hear teachings, receive empowerments and prophecies, and are inspired and encouraged. From that vantage you awaken to buddhahood within the primordial expanse of inner basic space.

Alternatively, above the mandala of the realms of the five families is the terrifying charnel ground of Erupting Volcano, in which the universal master of the sixth buddha family manifests in wrathful form as the teacher Zhönu Pawo Topden—a great and terrifying aspect of timeless awareness—with a retinue of multitudes of wrathful dakas and dakinis who are rigdzins. A great rain of inconceivable vajrayana teachings—primarily those concerning the supreme methods of union and liberation—falls on them. Arouse intense devotion, thinking, "I will go now to that realm. I pray that the lama, the glorious and sublime heruka, guide me there swiftly!" At the same time, clearly visualize your mental body to be a chöjung of red light, within which your subtle energy and mind take the vivid form of a white *A* syllable. Envision this shooting like a lightning bolt, instantly dissolving into the heart center of the lama, the great and glorious one, as you awaken to buddhahood in the one taste of your inseparability with the lama. With this, you will swiftly attain total freedom.

The infallibility of these methods, moreover, is due solely to the immeasurable force of the blessings of the teachings and the lama, as well as the power of the total purity and supreme inconceivable truth of the nature of phenomena.

The Conclusion

The third division concerns those factors that would seem to be indispensable to any practical implementation of the vajrayana path, not just in this context.

If you have little faith and devotion for your lama, it will be difficult for you to be effective in any efforts you make in other, more superficial aspects of the path. So do not indulge in your doubts, censuring your kind root lama with critical thoughts or feeling too casual a familiarity. If instead you develop pure view, seeing the lama truly as a buddha, as well as uncompromising and intense faith and devotion, with a conviction that cannot be undermined by any circumstances, you will have all that you wish for, including the siddhis of the mantra approach, in the palm of your hand, as a matter of course and without hindrance. Therefore, put into practice what I have explained from the beginning until now, and pray with a piercing intensity.

You are oppressed by the five mind-body aggregates, which are the material causes of the perpetuation of samsara and which are subject to decay. They are effectively the basis of all the various form of your suffering, as well as the unbearable effects of harmful actions that cause this suffering. If you do not cut through your self-perpetuating connection with these aggregates, there is no chance that suffering will play itself out and come to an end. Contemplate again and again this flaw that is intrinsic to samsara. Cultivate over and over a special attitude of renunciation—a certainty that motivates you to seek liberation for yourself and others.

All ordinary beings, with their negative karma, are equal to space in their extent. They have been your mothers and have cared for you with kindness. But forget about any of them being afraid of suffering, turning their backs on it, and knowing how to follow an authentic spiritual path. If you look at the situation in a straightforward way, you see that they are hopeless, deluded, and blind. Again and

again, arouse compassion for them—the desire that they be free of the causes of suffering and their effects.

Take all of these things as the foundation of your spiritual path. To think, "Everything other than my lama and these teachings is impure" is to entertain false concepts. Rather than reinforce such ignoble concepts within yourself, emphasize an attitude of devotion for all lamas and sources of refuge in general, relying on your faith, devotion, and pure perception toward all, not saying one thing but feeling another.

Phenomena as they appear to you at present, as well as the distractions of this world and this life, are without any true essence, and in fact cause you great harm. Cut through these complications, letting go of the big ones and rooting out the little ones. To begin with, when counterproductive attitudes arise and you think, "I must do this, I will do that," rein them in, until at last you remain quiet, without thinking about anything. Then all these fickle complications will be cut through automatically. Objects manifest to your six senses—forms, sounds, and so forth, whether pleasing or not. By understanding how to engage any of them without fixation, letting them be naturally free, you will "rely on the nectar of the six kinds of sense objects" without having to abandon them, for they will be supports on your path.

Let the respiration through your nostrils relax utterly without constraint (which is to say, let it subside), and train in breathing gently through your mouth, which is slightly open, with your lips and teeth barely parted, and pausing after the outbreath. Try as much as possible to hold the gentle vase breath called barlung, in which the retention in your belly causes it to protrude slightly. This breathing exercise gives rise to precious qualities.

More than any other avenue of your experience, the eyes function as the doorway through which the experience of utter lucidity arises, outwardly or inwardly—that is, they serve as the condition that determines whether it arises or diminishes. Rest them without shifting or blinking, gazing straight into empty basic space. At this stage, you should apply the key points of threefold space whenever you think of them. These points are rooted in naked, pristine awareness, so maintain it in its uncontrived essence by maintaining a balance between tension and looseness,

without becoming distracted and without reifying anything, so that you are never separate from it at any time or under any circumstances.

On certain days—the tenth days of the waxing and waning moon, on the days of the full and new moon, on the third and eighth days of the lunar cycle—offer tsok whenever you can, using whatever is available. Do not treat any positive roots you have established with indifference, but dedicate them wholeheartedly on behalf of the teachings and beings, enhancing them with completely sincere prayers of aspiration.

These points are all so important that each one seems more so than the last. Fortunate people who wish the very best for themselves and others should exert themselves accordingly.

Limitless teachings and pith instructions, vast and profound, are specific to the most majestic heart drop approach of sublime secrets. The fortune to hear, contemplate, and gain some view and understanding of these is so great that you could not find it in a hundred eons. So do not pollute these teachings with ignoble concepts, using them in a selfish search for personal glory or out of a desire to become famous for your erudition. Rather, devote any intelligence you have to reading and contemplating, over and over, the noble sources of the long historical and hidden treasure traditions in general, and especially—as I mentioned earlier—the Seven Treasuries and the "mother and child" collections of the heart drop teachings, for they are repositories of the dakinis' secrets and are without equal. Some people make desultory attempts to listen to these teachings, but before they have the slightest idea or understanding of their meaning, they immediately broadcast what they have heard. Hold the profound meaning in your heart without casting it to the winds. There is little fault, and great profit, in keeping to yourself what has been explained to you.

Do not follow after fools, but rely on authentic and holy lamas who are learned and accomplished, who know the teachings and whose motivation is altruistic. For the rest of your life, do not waver from seeking out such masters wherever they are and hearing the teachings directly from them. You will not plumb the depths of these profound secrets by listening to a few sectarian bigots who invent their own systems.

Do not disparage any spiritual teachings, but diligently pursue your own tradition. This is the root of all that is excellent in both the material and the spiritual worlds.

Now I will explain something about the ultimate fruition that comes to those who master such a path through their spiritual practice. That fruition is the supreme state of perfect buddhahood, which is naturally indwelling and becomes fully evident. This approach is even more special than the vajrayana in general, in which accomplishment comes about in a single lifetime. It is taught that in this case even inferior people can awaken to buddhahood in twelve years, while average people can do so in three years, and the very best can do so in six months. This, of course, depends on your diligence, whether excellent or average, in undertaking training in past lifetimes, as well as in the present one. But the actual result is perfect buddhahood, which consists of the two sacred kayas.

With this, I have completed my explanation of this swift path of ripening and liberation, complete and unerring, which consists of three sections. Chetzun sang a vajra song that begins, "How wondrous! For me, the madman Sengé Wangkhyug,$ . . . " specifically to extol the realization he gained through this path. As well, he left fortunate people with the seal of his trust. With these vajra words, sung at his passing, he tore the heart of the Great Perfection from his breast and placed it in the palms of our hands, leaving these last words as his legacy, to be the lot of fortunate ones until the end of time. He bestowed his vajra words of truth, his noble aspiration that, on the strength of this legacy, anyone who encounters this cycle will, before very long, swiftly attain the supreme transference to the vajrakaya of timeless awareness and be equal to the lama.

THE CONCLUDING ADVICE FROM THE DAKINI

The third major part concerns the vajra words that adorn the end of the text—the concluding advice from Palgyi Lodröma, foremost among the dakinis of timeless awareness.[21] This testament is imparted during the empowerment as a means of direct introduction. When the instruction is given, it is enlarged upon without error,

serving as a concise overview of the main points. When practice is undertaken, it is worn on the body to serve as the most excellent source of freedom that comes through physical contact. If you even see the text, meditative experiences will occur automatically. Even if you hold just a few words and their meaning in your mind or hold the text in your hands, this will ensure that you swiftly gain freedom, which means effectively that this brings freedom through recollection or physical contact. What need is there, then, to speak of the freedom that comes much more swiftly than in the foregoing cases, when someone meditates on this teaching in an authentic way?

Since it is endowed with such unsurpassable qualities, this concise and profound teaching, which draws together the main points, is more straightforward than other methods of practicing the heart drop teachings. Its words and their meaning are very clear. It is not supplemented with other methods of spiritual practice, for it contains everything that is necessary. And it is free of the elaborations that come from words that are not grounded in experience. Being so special, it can truly stand up under the scrutiny of many millions of learned and accomplished masters.

THE COLOPHON

Now, it is very true that other great masters in the past have treated these profound teachings with the utmost respect. They have issued some rather frightening imprecations, calling for the lives of those who distort, add to, or detract from these teachings—and even those who view or think of them too casually—to be swiftly cut off. And I have even seen injunctions to that effect issued by these masters to some of the more strict protective deities. Given all of this, I felt that it would be perfectly all right not to write anything at all. But since I have written this on the basis of the ritual liturgy, you may do the practice to some extent yourselves and do what you can to transmit it to others who are interested and involve them in it. Since these teachings are very appropriate for our times, even a negative connection with them would not be entirely without some useful result. It might even benefit, and certainly

would not cause any harm, so I ask that you please do whatever you can to keep these ideas in mind.

[Such was the great and unparalleled kindness that was so thoroughly shown to me by my lama as he uttered these weighty words of truth, this infallible and secret vajra command, which he conferred so generously on all beings.

The enlightened intent underlying the most secret and unsurpassable approach of Great Perfection—the most majestic pinnacle of the nine spiritual approaches—is a spacious, divine path along which my lord, the omniscient lama, the great Vajradhara, proceeded, for he is the great, majestic garuda of the dynamic energy of awareness. Following in his wake as he soars on outspread wings along that great path, people of such limited intelligence as I are like moths, and no matter how hard we flutter we cannot compare to him in the slightest. That goes without saying, but in addition, if I have committed any fault, I ask my lama to forgive me with his enlightened and greatly loving intent. May any virtue herein be a cause for me to be taken under his care from now until enlightenment, never separate from him.

This was written by me, Lerab Lingpa, who bears the title of a revealer of hidden treasure teachings and who sits in the lowest rank of the many learned and accomplished students of my lord lama. I have written down these notes on whatever I have understood of the salient points my lama made in his lectures over the years. May this endeavor prove completely positive!]

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1. The explanation of the terms and phrases of the title follow the order dictated by the syntax of the Tibetan language, which is almost entirely the reverse of the English order. The complete title in Tibetan is *Dzog-pa chen-po men-ngak-dei chü-pur men-ngak tam-chay kyi gyal-po long-ngai yi-gé dum-bu sum-pa Che-tzun chen-poi Bi-ma-lai zab-tik* (*The Quintessential Keystone for the Category of Direct Transmission in the Great Perfection Approach—The Three Sections Concerning the Syllables of the Five Expanses: The Most Majestic of All Pith Instructions*).
2. That is, the stages of development and completion in vajrayana meditation.
3. This is the line from the source text that reads, “Homage to the deity that is naturally occurring awareness!$”

4. The Lord of Secrets (Skt. Guhyapati; Tib. Sangwai Dakpo), the bodhisattva Vajrapani, was responsible for codifying the tantras of the vajrayana.

5. An alternative title for this work is *The Six Meditative Experiences* (*Gom Nyam Drukpa*).

6. This accounts for the line in the lineage supplication by Jamgön Kongtrul being altered from "Shri Singha, who received empowerment into the dynamic energy of awareness," to "Shri Singha and Jnanasutra, who received empowerment into the dynamic energy of awareness."

7. That is, the line referred to in note 6 above, in which Jnanasutra is not mentioned. "The lord Jamgön Lama" is an epithet of Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé.

8. This is the short title of a concise teaching manual on the Chetzun Nyingtik cycle by Jamgön Kongtrul. According to His Holiness Khenpo Jigmé Puntsok, of the three teaching manuals for this cycle, the present work by Terton Sogyal is the most profound, that by Adzom Drukpa Natsok Rangdrol the most extensive, and that by Jamgön Kongtrul the most concise treatment of the key points. A draft translation of Kongtrul's manual has been produced by David Christiansen.

9. Tibetan writers often refer to Chetzun Sengé Wangchuk as Simheshvara (pronounced by Tibetans Singhé Shora), the Sanskrit version of his name.

10. Here Jamyang Khyentzei Wangpo makes self-deprecating remarks in recounting to his students the experience he underwent in recalling these teachings.

11. Another form of one of Jamgön Kongtrul's personal names.

12. This refers to the personal liberation from suffering that an arhat attains, as opposed to both the liberation and omniscience that bodhisattvas attain in awakening to buddhahood.

13. These two citations read as follows:

> O guide, through ignorance and delusion
> I have contradicted and impaired my samaya.
> Lama, my guide, grant me refuge. Ah! Foremost one, holder of the vajra,
> you who embody supreme and innate compassion—
> I take refuge in you, foremost leader of beings.

I acknowledge and confess all the ways I have impaired or broken my primary and secondary samayas of enlightened form, speech, and mind. I pray, refine away all my patterns of obscurations, faults, and failings, and effects of harmful actions, and so purify me of them.

14. Known in Chinese as Wu T'ai Shan.

15. See note 6.

16. Here Jamyang Khyentsei Wangpo uses the Tibetan equivalent of the Sanskrit name Vimalamitra, although the Sanskrit is found in the prayer from the source text.

17. These are the five basic energies of life force (*sok-dzin*), excretion and reproduction (*tur-sel*), speech and respiration (*gyen-gyu*), digestion (*nyam-gyu*), and circulation and movement (*khyab-jé*). The five auxiliary energies are those of the nagas, connecting with the eyes; the tortoise, connecting with the heart; of Brahma, connecting with the nose; of Devadatta, connecting with the tongue; and of the God of Wealth, connecting with the whole body.

18. This is a reference to tzalung exercises and tummo meditation.

19. These are termed "smoke," "mirage," "clouds," "fireflies," "sunlight," "moonlight," "blazing gemstones," "eclipse," "starlight," and "light rays."

20. This is a reference to the postures of the three kayas.

21. This is the passage that begins, "This pithy and incisive vajra testament$ of Singhé Shora, whose form is one of timeless awareness,$ . . . "